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ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER AT THE NEW YORK, N. Y., POST OFFICE.

June 13, 1894.

No. 816.

Published Every
Wednesday.

Beadle & Adams, Publishers,
93 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Ten Cents a Copy.
\$5.00 a Year.

Vol. LXIII.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

BUFFALO BILL'S RED TRAIL

Or, The Road-Rider Renegade's Run-Down.



"UP WITH YOUR HANDS, RENEGADE, OR YOU DIE!"

Buffalo Bill's Red Trail;

OR, THE

Road-Rider Renegade's Run-Down.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERIOUS SERGEANT.

"THERE'S Buffalo Bill now, miss, the very man I spoke of, and with him on the trail now, I do not fear road-agents."

The speaker was Jack Jessop, the driver of the coach running between Pioneer City, a mining-camp and settlement, and Fort Advance, a military post near which was the miners' camp and a few settlers' cabins.

It was a most dangerous run that Jack Jessop had, not only on account of the hard trail to drive, but because it bordered the Indian country, and more, had been haunted for a long time by a band of road-agents known as "Red Hand Riders" and "Birds of Prey."

But, Jack Jessop was a daring fellow, an expert driver, had faced death many times, and mounted his box each week for his run with no sign of dread but that he would get through all right.

On this run, when he is presented to the reader's notice, Jack had his misgivings, for on the box with him was a beautiful young girl, the daughter of a sergeant of Fort Advance, who was going to make her home at the fort.

Though only a sergeant's daughter, Jack had found that she was an heiress, and had lots of baggage along, wore jewels of value, and she had hinted that she was well supplied with money.

In addition to his fair passenger, who rode with him on the box, Jack Jessop had three passengers inside the coach, a young officer, who had told him he had a large sum of money with him belonging to the Government, and two speculators who were also well supplied with gold for purchases they might make in the mining settlement.

It was on account of carrying such passengers that Jessop was nervous over his run, but he hid his dread from his lady companion on the box, and had entertained her as he drove along with stories of the frontier and spoke of several men who had become famous there from their many daring deeds.

The young girl had been intensely interested in all that he told her, and had been lost in admiration at his splendid driving, seeing him go along places where only the coolest nerve and greatest skill saved them from destruction.

"I tell you, miss, this be a strange country, and a strange people live in it," went on Jack, delighted at having so good a listener.

"Now, thar's ther Injuns. They is queer folks, and trained to kill, and does kill, whenever they gets the chance."

"Ther soldiers is out here also to kill and get kilt, and in the settlements and mining camps somebody nightly tarns up the'r toes under a bullet, or a knife."

"And yet you like it here?"

"Like it, miss?"

"I loves it, for we gets the fresh air, the beautiful scenery, the fine drives along the trail and has the pleasure of risking life and danger each day."

"Now take Buffalo Bill for instance."

"Buffalo Bill—yes, I have heard of him as a great scout."

"The greatest of 'em all, miss, is Bill."

"He were born and bred in ther Wild West, and he'll die here too I guess."

"He was reared to a life of danger and death, of hardships and struggles from a boy, and he's made his name famous as an Indian-fighter, a scout, guide and all-round game fellow."

"It's only such a country as this could turn out such a man."

"Where is he now?"

"At Fort Advance, miss, where he's chief of scouts, for he has under him about two dozen jist such fellers as he himself, and he makes a record for them 'most every day."

"Your pa knows him, miss, and they is good pards."

"Now there's your pa, miss."

"And what about him?" asked Lucille Fallon with a smile.

"Well, I jist don't know, miss, what about him, and nobody else knows, either."

"He's called the Mysterious Sergeant, for he rode into a soldier camp one day, several years ago, coming from no one knew where, going nobody knew where, and enlisted as a private in a cavalry troop."

"He was a born gentleman, all seen, educated, and a soldier too, and he soon begun to make a name for himself as an Injun-fighter."

"He saved the life of a soldier one day at the risk of his own; then again he saved Colonel Carr's life, and was made corporal, then sergeant, and is now fort ordnance sergeant, with a strong chance of a commission."

"They say he was an officer in the Confederate Army, for he is a born soldier, but nobody knows."

"None knew he was married until a couple of weeks ago, when he tells the colonel his daughter is coming to the fort, and asks to fix up quarters for her, and the colonel gave him the best, and you'll find all glad to see you, miss, from the commandant to the humblest soldier, for all at Fort Advance loves your father, if they doesn't know anything about him," and Jack Jessop paused as though to give Lucille Fallon a chance to tell what she knew about her father.

But not a word did she utter to solve the secret of the Mysterious Sergeant of Fort Advance.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCOUT.

FINDING that Lucille Fallon offered no explanation of who, or what her father might have been in the past, Jack Jessop winked his off eye at himself as much as to say:

"No, yer didn't, Jack; she didn't bite to the bait."

As the young girl remained silent Jack went on:

"Now, miss, you'll like it at the fort, I know, for there's a lot of handsome young fellows there, and I does opine, bein' for the respect all holds for your pa, that you won't be treated just like the daughter of a sergeant would be under ordinary circumstances."

"Yer see, the quarters yer'll have is at the end of the row of married officers' cabins, and yer pa being ordnance sergeant of the fort and a gent o' education, while it is said you is a heiress though your father is poor, the ladies is going to welcome you like the lady you is, and jist as they should do, if there hain't no shoulder-straps on the sergeant's uniform."

Lucille Fallon was still silent, but it was evident that the driver's words were making an impression upon her; they were giving her an insight into fort life, and just what position her father held and the place she would occupy as a sergeant's daughter.

A beautiful girl of seventeen, possessing a graceful form, refined manners and the thorough stamp of a lady, she was only a sergeant's daughter she was now to feel, and she pondered deeply over the words of Jack Jessop, and urged him to talk, for she wished to know all and had no desire to make any mistake in the new life she was entering upon at the fort.

She was glad indeed to be forewarned by being forewarned, and so Jack, who loved to talk, was urged to continue on giving her an insight into what was before her.

"I thinks you looks like yer pa, miss, for he's a mighty handsome man, as you doubt less knows," and Jack paid a compliment in his odd way.

"No, I do not remember, for I do not recall my father, being only an infant when he left home; but I have a miniature likeness of him and it shows him to be a very handsome man, though naturally I would be prejudiced in my opinion."

"You hain't, miss, for Buffalo Bill and Sergeant Fallon is called the two handsomest men in the army, though Lieutenant Walter Worth hain't far behind 'em on good looks."

"When you sees Buffalo Bill, miss, yer'll see a man yer'll never forget."

"Is he at the fort now?"

"Maybe he is, and maybe he isn't, miss, for he's more oftener away on the trail looking up danger from Indians and the road-

agents, for the latter has lately cut a warning of death to him in the monument erected on Monument Hill, the spot where Six-horse Sam, my pard, lost his life, along with others who was passengers."

"What kind of an accident was it?"

"It wasn't no accident, miss, but sheer deviltry, for the road-agents—the Red Hand Riders we calls 'em—jist kilt poor Sam and others."

"Now they has put out a warning ag'in' Buffalo Bill, that they will kill him if he don't leave this country."

"And will he leave?"

"Lordy, miss, you don't know Buffalo Bill, or you'd never ask that!"

"Why, he'll stay right here, if death is sartain; but he's got no idea of dying, and we all think he has a charmed life, don't you see?"

"And these outlaws, the Red Hand Riders, you called them, infest this trail?"

"Yes, miss, first my run, then another trail on the south branch, again striking the one going north out of Pioneer City, and sometimes hitting the main line which you come along."

"And they cannot be run down?"

"Well, they hain't been yet, for you see they is friendly with the Injuns, they has spies in the fort and settlements, and so get posted when a force is to move against them and retreat to the red-skin country or disperse."

"Who they is nobody knows, for they goes masked, and they is called by birds' names, their captain being known as Captain Eagle."

"A strange lot of men indeed, and I hope we will not meet them."

"So does I, miss, for your sake; but, yonder is Monument Hill, miss, and—there's Buffalo Bill now—the very man I spoke of; and with him on the trail I do not fear road-agents," and Jack Jessop pointed ahead to where a horseman was visible near a white wooden cross erected as a monument on the trail.

It was the monument erected to the memory of Six-Horse Sam, who had been killed there, and upon which had been cut the warning, or "death-knell," to Buffalo Bill the scout, who now showed his disregard of it by calmly waiting there on the fatal spot for the coach to come up.

Looking fixedly at him as she approached, Lucille Fallon saw a man who was indeed one to never forget.

Tall, splendidly formed, a superb rider, a face that was full of manly beauty, strong and fearless, and about him a manner of calm repose, he looked the hero she had been told that he was, while, reining back his horse as the coach came to a halt, he raised his broad sombrero with a courtly grace that was very winning, and bent low at the introduction given him by Jack Jessop to the sergeant's daughter.

CHAPTER III.

THE RED HAND RIDERS.

"WELL, miss, what does yer think of Buffalo Bill?"

So asked Jack Jessop as the coach rolled on its way once more toward the fort, after the talk held with Buffalo Bill the scout at Monument Hill.

Lucille Fallon did not at first reply. She seemed to be thinking of the man she had just met.

Then she answered:

"Think of him? Why, I think he is the finest specimen of manhood I ever beheld. He looks the hero that he is, and were I in trouble he is just the man I would go to, or seek help of."

"You've got him down fine, miss, and let me tell you now that I feels better since we has met him on ther trail."

"Yer see, ther Red Hand Riders is a bad lot o' outlaws, wicked, merciless and daring, and they has spies, I is sart'in, who in some way gets them word when the stages is coming through with booty, or anybody worth holding up."

"Now your comin' has been known, and it's about pay time at the fort, and Lieutenant Leslie is expected to have Government money with him, while I heard the two men inside, strangers to me, was going to the

mines to look up speculations, so they must have money along.

"You has got the dust, and plenty of baggage, and I tell you it would be bad to see the Red Riders on this run."

"But you feel no anxiety now that you have seen Buffalo Bill?"

"I don't exactly say that, miss, for there's danger clean up in sight of the fort, where we is due at sunset, though I'm pushing to get in ahead of time so you can have daylight to welcome you."

"You are very kind, Mr. Jessop."

"Don't mister me please, miss, for I is plain Jack, or Jessop, as you pleases, called by my pards Champion Driver of the Overland," and Jack Jessop added the last with pardonable pride, while Lucille Fallon remarked:

"From what I have seen, you deserve the title, and I was told a long way back that the worst piece of road I would have to go over I would find that Jack Jessop, the Ribbon Sharp, would be the driver, so I would have nothing to fear."

Jack seemed hardly to hear the complimentary words, for his eyes were scouring the horizon, where waves of inky clouds were rising and obscuring the skies.

"I fear we is going to have a storm, miss, and a bad one, and it is not what I care to meet on this trail, as there are cliffs to go round, canyons to pass through, and heavy timber along the trail, not to speak of streams that rise like lightning into torrents."

"I'll force 'em along a little more," and as Jack Jessop called to his horses to quicken their pace, there suddenly burst out of the black clouds a livid flame followed by a deafening crash of thunder.

"This is grand," cried Lucille Fallon unmindful of the danger, and she smiled as she saw the heads suddenly thrust out of the coach windows, for the passengers inside had had no sight of the rising storm.

The coach rolled rapidly on, the eyes of the driver upon his team and the gathering tempest, which he saw was increasing in fury as it rose.

"We is going to have the worst storm I ever seen in these parts," he muttered, as he still urged his horses on.

"I'm anxious to get over Canyon River Bridge afore it breaks, for that be a dangerous place to cross even in good weather; but beyond is an old camp we kin strike for if the storm gets very bad, as we cannot cross some of the streams, I fear; but you bet, miss, I'll push on, if there's a chance to get you there."

"The storm I glory in, for I never saw anything more magnificent, and I only hope it will keep the Red Riders off."

"I hope so, miss; but I seen Buffalo Bill was a trifle anxious about you, and so is I, for them Red Riders is devils."

Along the trail swung the coach, the six horses going at a pace that few men would have dared force them, over such a perilous trail.

But Jack Jessop was showing his just claim to being called the "Ribbon Sharp of the Overland," and he pushed along with nerve and skill that won Lucille Fallon's admiration, dividing it with the grandeur of the rising tempest.

At length they came to a long, winding descent down a canyon, to the Canyon River below, the river dashing along through cliff-like banks that rose hundreds of feet above the water, which surged swiftly along through its narrow chasm.

"There's the bridge, miss," said Jack Jessop, and as he uttered the words a party of horsemen rode out into the trail ahead of him, causing him to cry out:

"The Red Hand Riders have got us!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOLD-UP.

THE words of Jack Jessop told Lucille Fallon that the worst fears of the driver were realized, that in spite of the warning of Buffalo Bill of danger on the trail, the Red Hand Riders were upon them.

In spite, too, of the rising storm, the swift pace of the coach team, and the fact that once across Canyon River little danger was to be feared from the outlaws, there they were,

The bridge, a narrow structure of long timber stretchers and split logs, was but a few hundred yards away; but the horsemen had ridden into the trail between the coach and it.

There was a pine thicket on each side of the trail, the canyon towering overhead, and from the shadows had come the outlaws.

There were about a dozen of them, two standing like sentinels in the trail, four riding on each side, up to the coach, and one man who appeared to be the chief seated upon his horse and waiting.

Not a word was spoken, the outlaws had just shown themselves, formed for work, and the eight went at a canter until they passed the coach, when they wheeled and halted on each side like an escort.

Jack Jessop seemed to know their way of procedure, for he drove on until his leaders were up to the chief and then he halted, but called out:

"I'd like ter run yer down, but I dasn't, yer Imp o' Hades."

Lucille was surprised and alarmed at the bold words of the driver, and gazed at the outlaws, they having now supplanted the storm in her mind.

She saw that all were mounted upon blood-bay horses, that they wore a kind of uniform, were masked and their hands were covered with buckskin gloves dyed to a carmine hue.

Whether white, red-skin or negro she could not tell, for nothing could be seen to testify, so shielded were they by their masks.

"Well, Jack, you thought you would get through this time, but here we are," said the chief.

"Does yer think I'm blind that I don't see yer?" growled the driver.

"Neither deaf, dumb nor blind, Jack, are you, so answer questions, for that storm is not far away."

"What does yer want?"

"Who have you along?"

"This young miss, ther daughter of a sergeant at ther fort, a young officer and two gents I don't know."

"Any money?"

"No! yer won't git nothin', onless yer robs this young lady o' her petticoats."

"Jack, you are not as well informed as I am, for though that young lady is a sergeant's daughter, yes, the daughter of one who has been hot on my trail more than once, she is an heiress in her own right, and has plenty of money along with jewels too and lots of valuable baggage."

"Yer pertends ter know it all."

"I don't pretend, Jack, but know, as I will show you."

"Waal?"

"The lieutenant inside is sent out as Colonel Carr's aide, but he is really paymaster, and has his boodle along and plenty of it."

"You is away off."

"I will also tell you, that the two other passengers are gold sharks, men looking for paying mines, and with the money to buy them at low prices from poor miners."

"I am posted, you see, and as all four of your passengers not only have money, but are valuable to ransom, I shall capture the outfit and hold them for future payments."

"I say, Lieutenant Leslie kin drive a team well, so let me stay as hostage, and he take the coach on to the fort and state your terms."

"No, Jack, you are not valuable enough as a hostage; but I shall keep you also, for the coach company have got to pay to get you back also, as this is my star hold-up, my champion haul, and should get me a fortune, and I need it, for Buffalo Bill has vowed to run the Red Riders off the trail, I hear, and I'm a little afraid of him, I admit."

"I'll bet you ten to one Buffalo Bill hangs you yet, payable the day you is strung up," savagely said Jack Jessop.

"What good would the money do me if I won, Jack?" laughed the outlaw chief.

"Give you a good funeral."

"My executioners will see to that; but come, no man can hold the reins as you can, and I'm going to play a deep game with the aid of this team, so you are to drive."

"Where?"

"Down the river valley through the night, for the storm will destroy the trail."

"I'll not drive an inch."

"Then one of my men shall, and that may mean an upset and death to the young lady."

"I'll drive."

"You are wise; but I'll put the gentlemen in irons first, have the young lady enter the coach and disarm you."

"I will still ride on the box," said Lucille firmly.

"But you will be drenched, Miss Fallon and—"

"I have rubber wraps, and can keep perfectly dry."

"I will not ride inside the coach," was the determined reply of the young girl.

"As you please, if you are willing to take the consequences," was the reply of the road-agent chief.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT IN THE STORM.

THERE was every indication that the storm would break before very long, and the outlaws were preparing for it by getting their storm-coats ready.

The chief called to three of his men, who dismounting, disarmed the driver of the coach, and got roundly cursed for doing so, though of course Jack Jessop dared not offer resistance.

Then they called to the passengers to get out and they too were disarmed and then their ankles manacled together, while the inside of the coach was thoroughly searched.

Lucille Fallon having put on her rubber coat, and a slouch hat she took from her sachel, Jack Jessop arranged the leather aprons and blankets about her, and then said in his brusque way:

"Well, cut-throat chief, I'm ready, for there is no need of staying here."

"And I am ready, but there is work for some of you men to do, after awhile you can follow, for that storm will destroy all trails and I shall play a cunning game now, Jack Jessop, which will throw even your famous chief of scouts, Buffalo Bill, off the trail."

"You've got to make it clever to do that; but I'm betting big money you can't blind no trail so Buffalo Bill can't follow it."

"Can I not?"

"We shall see," and with a confident tone he called out:

"Sparrow, take six men with you, get axes from the pack-horses, and go and destroy the bridge across Canyon River."

"Cut it away as though the storm had caused it to go down, see?"

"Yes, Captain Eagle," answered the man addressed as Sparrow.

"Make a clever job of it, and then follow on the trail down the river, and hold on until you get to camp, for I shall keep on until after midnight, so as to be far away in the morning where my trail will not be seen."

"And you mean that those at the fort shall believe that the coach, and all with it, went down with the bridge, does yer, Cap'n Eagle?"

"I do, Jack Jessop."

"Waal, you is about ther worst piece o' humanity I ever come across."

"Thanks, Jack."

"What do you think now of your friend Buffalo Bill, following our trail?"

"He'll follow it if it leads to Perdition, mark my words," was the energetic response of the Overland driver, and with a mocking laugh the chief ordered two of his men to get their lanterns from the pack-horses and have them ready to light when night came on.

Soon all was in readiness for the start, seven of the band having gone to the bridge to destroy it, and the others riding to the rear of the coach, the chief taking the lead.

"Follow me, Jack, and remember, this must be the drive of your life, for you'll have a new trail to go over, and darkness that can be felt, not to speak of that storm, which threatens to be about as bad as any I ever saw in these mountains."

With this the chief rode on, and after casting a longing look toward the river, and another back up the trail he had come, as though hoping for aid, Jack Jessop gathered up his reins and followed the outlaw leader.

The horses did not seem to at first relish this turning off the trail they knew so well, but Jack used his whip and soon had them well at work.

It was growing late now, for the sun was nearing the horizon, and but for the hold-up the coach would have been near the fort.

The whole skies were overcast now with black clouds, the lightning was vivid and blinding, the thunder terrific, and far off on the mountain-tops the trees could be seen swaying wildly under the force of the hurricane, for it was nothing more.

The storm was breaking, and before long would sweep down the valley with irresistible force.

The scene was a grand one, though appalling, as the Red Hand Riders began their flight through the storm.

Jack Jessop looked at his companion, as she sat by his side.

She was pale, but perfectly calm.

"You has got nerve enough for a man, miss, and no mistake," he muttered.

"That storm is appalling, and our situation but adds to the terror; but, I have confidence in you, and do not believe those outlaws will really harm us," was the answer.

"Do you not think you had best come into the coach, Miss Fallon?" called out Lieutenant Leslie; but thanking him the brave girl replied:

"No, I shall be just as safe here, and I am too well wrapped up to get wet."

In a short while the storm was upon them, and with a fury and power that startled the horses and caused the coach to sway wildly under the force of the wind.

But Jack Jessop urged them on, and followed the leader steadily.

Then the rain fell in sheets of water, but fortunately at their backs, and small rivers of water flowed about them.

Darkness soon followed, two of the outlaws rode to the front with lanterns, and through the blackness and storm the flight was continued in spite of the desperate danger.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ISLAND RETREAT.

GAZING upon an island in the center of a broad, swift-flowing and shallow river, no one would have believed that within its towering cliff-banks of rocks was a garden of beauty.

The island was a hundred acres in size, and in the upper cliffs began a canyon, widening into a valley that was fertile, dotted with trees and through which wound a tiny stream fed by springs.

In the canyon stood a large cabin of heavy logs, with a rock chimney, and further back a smaller one.

Horses and cattle dotted the valley, a few sheep were there also, and a garden spot where grew various vegetables was walled in against the cliffs.

It was an ideal border home, with its rude, broad piazza, its comfortable surroundings and quiet repose.

To reach this island home one had to ford the river at two places, for it had to be crossed to one bank which was bold and precipitous, along which the trail lay, and from that shore at a certain point to where there was a split in the rocky bank through which one passed up into the little cliff-guarded valley.

Seated upon the piazza of the cabin was a woman, reading a book, while working in the garden was a negro man who had passed his half a century of years.

A negress of nearly his age was bustling in and out of the cabin engaged in preparing the evening meal, and the picture was one of peace and contentment apparently.

The smoke curled upward from the chimney, the horses and cattle grazing quietly about the valley, saddles, among them a side-saddle, with bridles and lariats, hung under the roof of the piazza, with a rifle on pegs and a belt of arms near it.

There was a bench and a couple of rustic easy-chairs on the piazza, and in one of them sat the woman.

She was young, scarcely over twenty-five, and her buckskin dress revealed a perfect form.

Her face was very beautiful, darkly bronzed by exposure, yet it wore a look of sadness, but was intelligent, refined and with a certain look of daring and determination upon it which had been stamped there doubtless by the wild life of freedom and

danger which she could not but lead in that far-away home.

Within the cabin there was an evidence of comfort one would not expect to find in that remote retreat, while there were shelves of books, a guitar, pencil sketches and paintings, evidence of refined tastes and accomplishments in the fair dweller in the little home.

"Oh! will this life ever end?" suddenly said the woman, dropping the book in her lap and proving by her words that her mind was not upon what she had been reading.

"With Loyd Lamar all that I once believed him, I could be happy in the wilderness.

"But, as it is, knowing him to be what he is, I find pleasure only in the knowledge that this life hides me from those whom I would not have known all of my sorrow, all that he is.

"But some day it must and shall end.

"Were it not for his threats, which I feel he would keep, against those two dear old colored friends who cling to me through all, I could find a way to escape from here, and would quickly do so.

"I could save myself but not them, and well he knows that I will not leave them to his fury, to his merciless nature.

"But some day the end will come, for he cannot live the life he does and not sooner or later meet his fate for defying, as he does, the laws of God and man—oh! there he comes now, and—as I live, he is not alone.

"What does that mean, for he never allows any of his men to know of this retreat."

As she mused, the woman's eyes, bent down the valley, had fallen upon a horseman who had emerged from the split in the rock, or cliff, that formed the wall of the island, and through which was the only means of ingress and egress to the valley.

The horseman was not alone, however, for behind him came another rider, and following were half a dozen pack-animals heavily laden.

"It is a woman, not a man!

"What does it mean?

"Ah! what can it mean other than that he has made some poor, unfortunate woman suffer through his lawless acts.

"And he has brought her here?

"Well, I am glad at least that he has done so."

The woman continued to gaze upon the horseman and his companion, at the same time calling to the negro man to come to her.

As the negro approached she said:

"Here is the chief, Uncle Toby, and he is not alone."

"So I sees, missy; but it am a leddy with him, and she do look like a mighty pretty young girl."

"Alas, yes," and just then the horseman drew rein, leaped from his saddle and called out:

"Here, Mildred, I have brought company for you, a young lady who is to be your captive guest until I can collect the liberal ransom I shall demand for her release."

CHAPTER VII.

THE OUTLAW'S VOW.

SEVERAL weeks after the arrival of the horseman in the island, accompanied by a fair guest, a man rode along a ridge toward the base of a lofty spur that broke off suddenly, with a drop of hundreds of feet, in the higher summits of a range of mountains.

He had climbed slowly up a steep and zig-zag trail to the ridge, glancing back now and then at the view spread out before him of wildest grandeur and desolation, for within the scope of the vision there was not visible a single house, no curling smoke from a fireside, no cattle dotting the valleys and plains.

All was solitude, vast and wild.

Reaching the summit of the ridge, along the trail that led up from the river flowing at the base of the hills, he followed it toward the cliff.

But suddenly he halted, just as he came in sight of a number of cabins nestling away under the cliff.

There was no sign of life about them and something caught his eyes that caused him to cry out:

"My God! what does this mean?

"Some one has been here, or they have deserted me!"

He put spurs to his horse and dashed forward, but stopped almost as suddenly and said:

"Am I mad?

"There may be a trap set for me there?"

Dismounting, he left his horse standing unhitched, and with a rifle unslung from his saddle, he moved cautiously forward, making a flank movement from rock to rock upon the cabins.

He was a man of commanding presence, wearing military boots, a slouch hat encircled by a gold cord, a military fatigue suit, and a belt of arms.

But strangest of all he was masked and wore red gauntlet gloves.

The man was the same who had held up Jack Jessop's stage-coach weeks before, the leader of the Red Hand Riders of the Rockies.

From rock to rock, tree to tree he made his way toward the cabins, and as he advanced he saw continued evidence that the place seemed deserted and that some one had been there since his departure.

"What can it mean?" he muttered.

Then he answered his own question:

"Why, what can it mean other than that Buffalo Bill has tracked me here and ended all.

"It is lucky for me that I was not here, for, from the appearance of things the band has been entirely wiped out, and I would have shared the same fate."

With this he moved on once more, and with the greatest caution, for he was looking for a trap.

At length he came near two cabins that stood in the entrance of a small canyon penetrating the overhanging cliff or spur.

Back in the canyon was another cabin, and these three comprised the living-quarters of the Red Hand Riders in their retreat in the mountains a hundred miles from Fort Advance.

There was a wall of rock around the mouth of the canyon, which had been thrown up to serve as a breastwork from behind which to resist attack and also as a barrier for a cattle corral, for there were bars in one side of it next to the cliff.

The cabins were large, roughly built, and had a roof-shelter around them to sit under in bad weather.

In the canyon close to the cliff, were a number of newly made graves, and seeing that the cabins were utterly deserted and that they had been robbed of their contents, the outlaw chief walked over to the mounds that marked the last resting-place of about a dozen dead.

There were two groups of graves, apart from each other, and upon the rocks over the larger number was painted:

"HERE LIE BURIED,

"Seven men, names unknown, but members of the outlaw band of

"RED HAND RIDERS

"Slain by United States Cavalry, under command of Lieutenant Walter Worth, and tracked down by Buffalo Bill, Scout and Guide."

The other group of graves were three in number, and painted by the same hand on the rocks were the names of two soldiers and a scout who had fallen in the attack upon the outlaw retreat.

"Well! this means that my band has been wiped out, that I am a chief without a follower, and I owe it to Buffalo Bill, the man whom I warned to leave this part of the country, or he should die by the hands of the Red Hands.

"Jack Jessop has won his bet, in that Buffalo Bill has tracked them here.

"There lie seven of my men, and the balance, I suppose, are wounded, or prisoners.

"My captives have been rescued, and thus fades away a large golden ransom from them.

"My camp is in ruins, and I am alone: but I do not despair, for not one of my men

knew of my secret retreat, my island home, where dwells Mildred and my fair captive in whom I have a rich treasure.

"I will go there at once, and then I will plot, for 'Gold and Revenge' is my motto now.

"Yes, I swear it, I take a solemn vow here to yet be avenged, and Buffalo Bill will I hunt down, yes, hunt off the face of the earth.

"I am hurt, but not beaten; wounded, but not fatally," and after walking over the camp, and seeing that the victors had made a clean sweep of it, the outlaw chief mounted his horse and rode rapidly over the miles that intervened between the retreat and the island.

He arrived at night, and loud and bitter were his words when he found that the scout had unearthed his secret retreat also.

Climbing up to the cliff-top, he built a signal-fire and savagely muttered the words.

"Yes, my signal will call Chief Iron Eyes to my aid, and I will start at once on the trail of the despoilers, for they are not far away, and cannot travel fast, hampered as they are."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SIGNAL ANSWERED.

FROM the top of the tallest cliff overhanging the river valley, in which was the rock-bound island where dwelt a mysterious woman, whose life held some strange, cruel secret, there flamed up a fire which could be seen far away.

The outlaw chief had ridden as far up the steep ascent as his horse could go, and then on foot he had climbed on up to the top.

All was darkness and desolation as he glanced around him over the many miles of mountain, valley and plain.

Dark and deserted was the island which had been his secret retreat, or rather where Mildred, the mysterious woman, had dwelt.

The summit of the cliff was covered with a few trees, pines, and several of these were dead and dry.

At the base of one of these dead trees was a pile of wood, placed there evidently for the purpose it was then to be used for.

Lighting a match the outlaw built a fire, and as the flames grew brighter they kindled the tree and shooting upward and upward soon there was a tall column of fire rising nearly a hundred feet above the top of the mountain.

Having set his signal of flame against the black skies the lone highwayman went back down the hill and mounting his horse rode to the valley a mile distant, and where there was signs of a former large encampment.

"They will see the signal and come here," he muttered as he dismounted, the glare of the burning tree even falling in the valley.

He knew that the pillar of fire would be seen many, many miles away, by the Indian sentinels stationed upon the lofty mountain-tops where were their villages, and, reported to Chief Iron Eyes, his young warriors would at once be dispatched to his aid, for warring against their own people the outlaws had as their allies the red-skins, who were repaid by booty taken from the whites, arms, and the fact that the Red Hand Riders were ever ready to give them warning of any intended move against them.

In fact the outlaw band, living by murder and robbery, were renegades to their own race and the friends of the Indians.

Having set his blazing signal against the skies, the outlaw leader retreated to the camp where the red-skins were wont to make a halting-place when in that part of the country, and there rested for the night.

It was just dawn when he arose and was on the watch, for he expected aid would not long be delayed.

He was right in his surmise, for he saw from his point of lookout a band of horsemen pushing swiftly along toward the spot where he was.

He watched them closely through his field-glass, and counting the long line of warriors said to himself:

"It is the young chief Death Face in the lead, and he is a hard fighter and able commander.

"Yes, he has a hundred braves with him, enough to make an ambush with, but not sufficient for an open attack, for the

trail of Buffalo Bill and his accursed followers shows at least forty men."

It was but a short while before Death Face and his braves came up, and the outlaw chief stepped out of his place of covert and revealed himself to them.

He spoke the Indian tongue fluently, and in an earnest manner said:

"My red brother, the great chief, Death Face, is welcome, and has come quickly to my aid.

"The fire signal was set to call my red friends to help me, for the scout chief, Buffalo Bill, has been to my retreat and killed and captured my people, has robbed me of all I had, and are retreating slowly to the fort, so I want my red brothers to help me."

The chief was a young man, and of fine physique and dignified mien, while he was most gorgeously attired in the barbaric fashion of the Indians, though his weapons were a belt with two revolvers and a bowie, and a repeating-rifle hung at his saddle-horn, for his horse, a fine animal, was equipped with a silver-studded Mexican saddle and bridle.

His hair was worn long, and upon his head was a gorgeous war-bonnet of eagle-feathers dyed in various hues.

The face and hands of the young chief were curiously and weirdly painted, for upon a black foundation was white skillfully put on to resemble a human skull, and bony fingers.

He had made a record for himself as a fighter, and was feared and respected by his braves, while he was next in command to Iron Eyes the head chief.

Having explained the situation to Death Face, the outlaw chief added:

"I am sorry my brother has not more braves with him."

"The Death Face has more braves coming, two more bands, each equal to this one.

"The signal of the white chief was seen, and the Death Face came quickly to his aid, telling other bands to follow.

"Where are the foes of my pale-face brother?"

Glad to know that he would have about three hundred braves to make the pursuit with, Captain Eagle explained the situation fully to the young chief, while the warriors rested and prepared breakfast, while awaiting for their comrades to come up.

"I had, as the Death Face knows, just returned from a visit to the Iron Eyes, and death and ruin greeted me, so I signaled for help.

"The warriors of the Iron Eyes met defeat only a short while ago at the hands of the pale-faces, but now they can get their revenge," said the outlaw, and an hour after, leaving a warrior to bring on the others when they arrived, he led the red-skin band in pursuit of those who had dealt him a deadly blow.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCOUT'S REPORT.

FORT ADVANCE was known as the "Plucky Outpost," from the fact that it had been established in the very heart of the Indian country, and had held its own against all odds.

The commandant, Colonel Carr, was one of the best officers in the service and an Indian-fighter of renown, and he had picked his command to hold his own.

Having been given a battery of eight guns, four twelve-pounders and four sixes, a battalion of infantry, with horses enough to mount them if necessary, and five troops of cavalry, he also had with him by special request made to the general commanding the department, Buffalo Bill and two dozen scouts, all of them picked men.

The colonel had also found among the miners who worked in the mountains near the fort, a company of volunteers, so that he had no reason to dread any force the Indians might attack him with if given warning of their coming in time to call his men to arms.

There was, a day's coach ride from Fort Advance, another mining and ranch settlement combined, known as Pioneer City, and this place could turn out a couple of large

companies of fighters in time of need, and had, in conjunction with the military, lately defeated a raid of red-skins that had swept down upon them, Buffalo Bill having given timely notice of the intended surprise.

It was just after the defeat of Iron Eyes and his band, that the raid of Lieutenant Walter Worth, guided by Buffalo Bill, had been started against the outlaw band of Red Riders, and Colonel Carr was feeling considerable anxiety regarding the fate of the little force of heroes, who had gone to the rescue of the captives held by Captain Eagle, when his orderly announced that the chief of scouts had just arrived and asked for an audience.

"Show him in at once," cried the colonel in a tone that showed his desire to know the exact situation of affairs in the front, from one so well able to inform him as was Buffalo Bill.

The scout entered, and his appearance indicated rough riding and hard service.

"Ho, Cody, glad to see you.

"Sit down and tell me what the news is from your expedition, for I have been more than anxious about all of you."

Buffalo Bill dropped into a chair like a man who was tired, indeed, and said in his quiet way:

"No cause for anxiety now, colonel, for all goes well."

"I am delighted to hear this; but, you were pursued by the Indians and had a hot fight of it; but I hope the reinforcements I sent got there in time to aid you."

"In the nick of time, sir, for we were hard pressed, and it was Captain Eagle, the outlaw leader, who urged the red-skins on, and they were anxious for revenge after their late defeat."

"Then you did not reach the outlaw retreat as you had hoped?"

"Oh, yes, sir; we got there with both feet, and wiped out the band, save the chief, who was off visiting old Iron Eyes, his ally, so escaped death or capture: but, shall I make my report from the first, sir?"

"Yes, do so," and the colonel called for his clerk to take down the scout's report in short-hand and then make a copy of it to be filed.

"To begin, sir, I never believed that the coach had gone down with the River Canyon Bridge the night of that fearful storm, and so I went down the river to look for some trace of it, of the horses, or bodies of the passengers.

"I found the wreckage of the bridge all right along the banks, then a camp with no trail leading to it, but a big one leading from it, and this proved that it had been made during the storm.

"I found in the fires iron and other traces of the coach, showing that it had been burned, and so taking the trail I sent for Lieutenant Worth, as agreed upon, and then, alone and ahead upon the track of the outlaws, I met one who warned me of the Indian raid upon you, so I came back with the warning, and you know how well they were beaten off, sir.

"The one who warned me was a woman, living with an old negro man and woman alone upon an island retreat far up in the mountains.

"I had met her before, when my horse fell with me, injuring me severely and she had found me and taken me to her home under an oath of secrecy, and not to betray her.

"Our second meeting was when I saved her from Injun Nick, whom I drove out of Pioneer City, and who intended to kill her, for it seems he had known her in the past.

"Her fall, dragged from her horse by his lariat, hurt her so severely she was unconscious, and so I carried her to her retreat, and she it was who gave me the warning of old Iron Eyes' secret raid.

"Leaving her delirious, and to the care of the negress, I came with the warning, and when, after the Indians were beaten back, I went on with Lieutenant Worth's command, I took Surgeon Denmead to her home and he soon checked her fever and started her on the way to recovery.

"That beautiful woman, Colonel Carr, is the wife of Captain Eagle, chief of the Red Riders."

"Poor woman."

"She believed him an honorable man, and

he brought her to these wilds, with the two negroes and there she has lived.

"I owe her my life, and we owe it to her that the Indians did not surprise the fort and settlements, sir.

"With her, where the outlaw chief had taken her with her baggage on pack-horses, was Miss Lucille Fallon, the sergeant's daughter."

"Thank God for that!"

"Cody, you are a wonder for getting at the bottom of a mystery," and the colonel warmly grasped the hand of the man who had brought him such a cheering report.

CHAPTER X.

OFF FOR A FIGHT.

"BUT go on with your story, Cody, for the safety of the sergeant's daughter assures me of the rescue also of Lieutenant Ernest Leslie, and the others who were with her on Jessop's coach."

"It does, sir, for where the chief took Miss Lucille to the retreat of his wife, not even known to his own men, he carried the others to his lair in the mountains, and there we found them, when we surprised their den."

"Glorious! and where are they?"

"Coming on with Lieutenant Worth, sir, for he told me to come on ahead and make the report, and then I wished to ask you, sir, if I could not guide a troop or two toward the Indian village and cut off the band under the outlaw leader and Chief Death Face, in their retreat, for we can do so?"

"A splendid idea, if you are able to make the ride, Cody, for you look jaded."

"Don't mind me, colonel, for I am all right, sir."

"Where did you last see the Indians?"

"They were beaten off, sir, in their last charge, about twenty miles above the camp in Canyon River Valley."

"They tried to get ahead to ambush us, but we thwarted them in that, sir."

"And they are now on their retreat?"

"Yes, sir, but will go very slow, for they have plenty of dead to bury and a number of wounded to carry along."

"What force would you suggest, Cody?"

"Two troops, sir, mounted and equipped for fast riding and hard fighting, sir, to strike a blow and then retreat."

The colonel sent his orderly after Captain Taylor of the Fifth Cavalry, and upon the appearance of that officer gave him orders to get two troops ready at once for a long ride and a fight with Indians.

"I will be ready, colonel, within the hour, sir," was the reply, and the officer took his leave, Buffalo Bill remarking:

"I will take ten of my men along, sir, as scouts."

"Do so; but now finish with your report, Cody."

"There is little more to add, sir, save that the outlaw's wife was most kind to the sergeant's daughter, and she is along with Lieutenant Worth and his command, accompanied by her two faithful negro servants who have shared with her her exile here in this wilderness."

"Mrs. Lamar, for such is her name, is being carried on a stretcher, as she is still quite ill, and Miss Fallon is her devoted nurse."

"In Miss Lamar's island home, the secret retreat of Eagle, the outlaw, we found the treasures of the Red Hands, and all that Lieutenant Ernest was robbed of, along with what was also taken from Miss Fallon and the two other passengers."

"And they are all along?"

"All of them, sir."

"It is fortunate none of them were shot by the outlaws."

"They were not, sir, even Jack Jessop, the driver, escaping this time."

"I am glad, for he is a brave fellow, but I fear will not wish to drive the trail again."

"On the contrary, sir, he is anxious to do so, and will relieve Toby Hart at once, he says."

"And Eagle's outlaws?"

"Except those whom we buried, sir, are prisoners along with Bat Brindley, whom I did not have to offer his pardon to, if he guided us to the retreat, and so brought him back."

"He richly deserves a rope about his neck."

"No one more so, sir."

"And Sergeant Fallon is almost wild with delight at the rescue of his daughter, I suppose?"

"Indeed, sir, he is, though he says but little; but she is a very beautiful young lady, refined and educated."

"Yes, and yet, as a sergeant's daughter, cannot hold the place here she is fitted to adorn; but my wife and the other ladies at the fort will do all they can to make her stay here pleasant at least, and I hope soon I will hear from our petition to the Secretary of War to make Fallon a lieutenant, for his gallant deeds merit it surely."

"I hope the petition may be successful, sir, for indeed he does deserve promotion to a commissioned officer's rank, sir, and in this last expedition Lieutenant Worth will report the gallant services he has rendered, and, colonel, I really believe he could command a large force in the field, sir, for he is a born soldier."

"I have heard, though I could not trace the authority, Cody, that he commanded a Confederate Regiment of cavalry in the late war, young as he then was, and it will be a strange coincidence, indeed, if he now wins a commission in the United States Army, an event that could occur only in our free country; but you must get ready for your expedition, only I wish you could get a few hours' rest."

"I can rest in the saddle, sir, thank you."

"When will Worth arrive with his party?"

"Not before to-morrow afternoon, sir, for he is forced to travel by very easy marches."

"I hope we can give you a good account of our expedition, sir, and return with the outlaw chief a prisoner," and with a hearty grasp of the colonel's hand, Buffalo Bill went to his quarters to, half an hour after, leave the fort with Captain Taylor and his gallant troopers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SCOUTS' AMBUSH.

CAPTAIN TAYLOR felt proud of his men as he rode out of the fort with them, seventy-five in number.

They were picked men and horses, with rations for ten days, ammunition in plenty, and armed with the best weapons.

Half a dozen pack-animals carried the outfit in the way of camping equipage, and the men were riding light for fast and hot work.

Buffalo Bill and ten scouts accompanied the expedition, bringing the force up to eighty-six fighters, all told.

The scout led the way, and after they were well out upon the trail, Captain Taylor rode forward and joined him.

The captain was a warm friend of the gallant scout, and had said to his lieutenants and surgeon before starting:

"The fact that Buffalo Bill is to be our guide, and we are to carry out some plan of his, makes success certain."

When he joined the scout he said:

"Now, Bill, the colonel only gave me orders to get my men ready, and start on an expedition which you would explain, and to use my own discretion in regard to what was best to be done."

"Yes, captain, and I will explain the matter in a few words."

"You are just back from the expedition with Lieutenant Worth?"

"Yes, sir."

"And it was a success?"

"Oh, yes, sir, for we struck the outlaws' retreat, rescued the prisoners they had, got captives in return among the Red Hands, and lots of booty, cattle and horses."

"Good! and they had there Jack Jessop's coach and passengers?"

"They had, sir."

"And the sergeant's daughter?"

"Is a beauty, sir, if that is what you wish to know," said Buffalo Bill slyly.

"It was not what I asked, Bill, and I am sorry she is a beauty."

"Sorry, sir?" said the scout with surprise.

"Yes, for she is only a sergeant's daughter, and I fear will from that reason be a sufferer from slights given her, and the object of attention from those officers who may not mean too well by her."

"Captain Taylor, when you see Miss Lucille Fallon, the sergeant's daughter, you

will discover that she is just the girl to take care of herself, one whom no one can snub, and who will put herself in no position to feel a slight which rank may at times force upon her."

"I am glad of this, Bill; but then the sergeant is a gentleman, a man of certain power and reserve that commands respect from all his officers, and demands it from his inferiors."

"My idea of the man is that he has a secret history that would make very entertaining matter if known."

"What he has been, sir, he keeps a secret, and I am sure his daughter's coming to him was a surprise he had not expected, but he makes the best of it."

"Well, I am anxious to see the outcome of it all; but now, Bill, what are we to do?"

"You see, sir, Captain Eagle, as the Red Hand Riders call their chief, was not at his den, but off on a visit to old Iron Eyes, so we missed him."

"He discovered our raid and pursued with the young chief Death Face and his band, and we beat them back with heavy loss."

"They are retreating with their dead and wounded, and I thought, sir, by striking this trail from the fort, we could head them off, ambush them and perhaps capture the outlaw chief, at the same time giving another severe blow to the red-skins."

"A splendid idea."

"I consulted with Lieutenant Worth, sir, and he told me to push on ahead and suggest it to the colonel, hinting that it would be a good idea to send you, sir, as he knew that you would push them hard."

"I'll do my best, and I'm thankful for the hint that gained me the chance; but it will break Worth's heart not to also be in the fight."

"Yes, sir, for he is a fighter from 'way-back, and handles troops like a veteran."

"He has covered himself with glory in this expedition, and will get a captain's straps for it, or I am greatly mistaken, for he had a small army under him, with his cavalry, guns and reinforcements from Pioneer City of miners."

"He commanded well, sir, and will make a great name for himself as an Indian-fighter, for he would rather fight than eat."

"Well, we must back him up by making a success of our expedition."

"We will, sir."

"How far will we have to go?"

"I wish to ambush them at the ford of the river, sir, catching them as they come out and enter the pass, for with a few men on the other shore, we can cut off their retreat and have them in a place where we can hit them hard."

"And their force, Cody?"

"As well as I could judge, sir, in their pursuit and attack, about three hundred warriors, though of course they may have sent for more braves, which we can look out for."

"That is right."

"Yes, sir, it was for that reason I brought so many of my scouts, as they can be on guard while we are lying in wait, to report any force coming from the Indian villages."

"Well, with my seventy-four gallant fellows, and you and your brave scouts, I do not fear any force less than a thousand, if it comes to a square fight."

"I suppose you wish to push on hard?"

"Yes, sir, for should they retreat more rapidly than I believe they will, we will just be on time, and be able to get into position."

"The horses will then have a chance to rest."

It was late at night when the command went into camp for supper and a few hours' rest, and when dawn broke they had been in the saddle for an hour again on the march.

At noon they had reached the pass, and an hour after were in ambush, for the Indians had not yet passed there on their retreat to their village thirty miles further up in the mountains.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE FORD.

THE situation chosen by Buffalo Bill as the right spot to place an ambush for the retreating red-skins, was formed by nature in a way to suit the scout's views exactly.

There the river was broad, saddle-girth deep, dotted with rocks that formed rapids, and flowed with great swiftness.

The fording place was not over a hundred yards wide, with deeper water above and below.

The trail on the other shore led down a steep and rugged hillside to the river, and on the shore where the scout had placed the soldiers there was a rocky lowland for a couple of hundred yards and then the trail led into a narrow canyon several miles through to a valley beyond.

The scout had crossed the river at a ford some miles below and picked his way up along the lowland bank to the pass, thus leaving no trail from the Indian village, or to it.

The horses had been staked out in a grass-covered swale beyond a ridge of rocks and willows, which hid them completely, and several soldiers were left to guard and care for them.

Across the river half a dozen scouts and twice as many soldiers had gone, crossing on horses which had then been led back again, and these men, under a lieutenant, had taken up a position to advance from where the fight began and thus check the retreat of the red-skins in a measure, for the latter would at once start for another ford a dozen miles up the river the scout felt certain.

The rest of the scouts were sent through the canyon toward the Indian village, to give timely notice of any force advancing from that direction.

This left Captain Taylor, Buffalo Bill and about sixty soldiers to go into ambush at the mouth of the pass, so as to command the ford.

The ambush had not been formed a moment too soon, for a signal came from one of the scouts on the other shore to be on the lookout, as the Indians were approaching.

The scout signaled from a hilltop from which he had a view of the trail beyond the ridge for half a dozen miles.

"They have retreated more rapidly than I expected they would, sir," said Buffalo Bill.

"Well, we are ready for them, or soon will be," answered Captain Taylor, and he ordered his men into their positions of hiding, scattered among the rocks on the steep side of the ridge which the canyon, or pass, split in twain.

"They are pushing to cross the river and camp for the night where our horses now are," added the scout.

"Well, they won't get there, Bill, if we can help it."

"No, sir; but I do hope that Captain Eagle is along."

"Yes, and I have given all the men orders not to fire on him, for he must be taken alive and hanged."

Buffalo Bill slightly started at this, and then, as he turned to go to his point of observation, for he was to give the signal when to open fire, he muttered:

"Well, it would be a good thing to capture and hang that fellow, the chief of the Red Hands with the rest of his gang of cut-throats; but should he be carried in a prisoner it would be a cruel blow to his beautiful wife, to feel that he would die at the rope end, and perhaps set her back in her recovery."

"If he was killed, she would be readily resigned to his fate, though he does not deserve the mercy of such a death."

"I guess I will make the outlaw's pretty wife a widow by putting a bullet through his brain, for that will be merciful to her—yes, that will be best," and the scout took up his position among the rocks at a point that gave him a good view of the ford and approach to the pass.

The defeat of the red-skin army under Chief Iron Eyes, some time before, and again in their attack on the rescue party under Lieutenant Worth, Buffalo Bill felt would be two lessons they would never forget, while the ambush then laid for them would really strike a panic to their hearts and command a peace along the frontier for some time to come.

If they could also kill the outlaw chief, then the work would be a glorious one indeed, for his men who were prisoners, would be quickly hanged for their crimes.

While the chief of scouts was thus musing

the man on the hill top across the river waved his flag three times around his head.

"The Indians very near."

"Now to shoot the outlaw chief and spare his lovely wife greater sorrow," was Buffalo Bill's resolve as he prepared for the fray.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LONE PURSUER.

As silent as death, the soldiers lay in their ambush, awaiting a call from the scout to rise and begin work, for not a man was visible.

Buffalo Bill, alone on the watch, was to call out to Captain Taylor the moment when it would be well to open fire, and that officer's clear voice would give the command to his men to begin their deadly work.

Watching the top of the distant ridge, shielded by a rock and pine bush, Buffalo Bill saw a red-skin horseman ride into view.

The scouts then had already skipped to their hiding-places.

The Indian halted a moment, gazing at the scene as though enjoying the picturesque beauty spread out before him.

Then he rode slowly on down the trail.

Soon after half a dozen other horsemen appeared, and behind them came a band of thirty, at their head riding two men whose appearance at once riveted the scout's gaze.

"There they are, Death Face, the young chief, and Captain Eagle."

They were riding side by side and behind them came their immediate body-guard of warriors.

Following this party came a number of Indian ponies dragging *travois*, bearing the Indian dead and wounded, for they had rigged up a means of carrying the bodies and the injured from the field.

Buffalo Bill counted the ponies dragging the *travois*, and muttered:

"Sixty."

"If every *travois* means a dead or wounded red-skin, we hit them hard; but wait until we open here, pard, and we'll hit you harder still," and the scout smiled grimly at the gruesome work before him, for though he held sympathy for the Indian, he yet felt that the severest means of punishment would soonest teach them to bury the tomahawk and be content to live in peace.

The ponies bearing the dead and wounded were followed by the main body of the Indians, some two hundred in number, and by the time the last of these, the rear guard, had crossed the ridge, the advance was in the river.

Stopping for their horses to drink, those in advance were quickly overtaken by those in the rear, and the whole party were heaped together.

The wounded were lifted to the backs of ponies now, for they could not be dragged through the river, and those most seriously hurt were held on by braves mounted behind them.

The dead were not taken from their resting-places on the *travois*, for nothing could harm them.

When the advance reached the other shore, they at once turned off for the lowland beyond the ledge and willows, as Buffalo Bill had surmised they would do, to camp there for the night.

When about half the force had crossed, and the balance were in the river, Buffalo Bill decided to give his signal to Captain Taylor.

The Indians had ridden along strangely silent and subdued, evidently pondering over their heavy losses of late and hoping for revenge.

Not a thought of danger ahead disturbed them, until suddenly, echoing from cliff to cliff, clear, wild and terrible, rung out the well-known war-cry of Buffalo Bill.

It at once caused a terrible scene of excitement in the Indian ranks, which was added to when Captain Taylor's commanding voice called to his men to fire, and three score carbines rattled forth showers of leaden hail.

Ponies and warriors went down, the red-skin braves shrunk back, staggered, bleeding and demoralized.

Some answered the fire of death with defiant war-cries and shots, and those in the river began to retreat.

Again the carbines flashed, and in one mass of confusion and terror the red-skins began the retreat across the river, just as the scouts and troopers on the other shore opened a hot fire upon them.

But they seemed to realize that their greatest danger lay ahead, and they surged frantically back upon the trail they had come, leaving their dead and dying behind them, and driven to desperation by the savage blow dealt upon them.

But there was one who did not turn back with the others.

He had started to do so, hesitated, and then deciding upon his course, had wheeled to the right and dashed up along the river-bank.

It was the quickest way to get out from under that terrible death-dealing fire.

It was the outlaw chief, and he went alone, for no red-skin saw, or if seeing, followed his example, and their young chief had pointed to retreat the way they had come.

The soldiers, remembering their orders, did not fire at the flying chief, and Buffalo Bill was not able to do so in time to check his flight, being down the stream from the ford.

But he saw his act, and leaping out of cover ran, at the risk of his life, for the bullets of the red-skins pattered about him, to where the pony of a chief had run, his rider having been slain.

Leaping upon the back of the animal, he had turned him in chase of the fugitive outlaw, to find the horse was of little speed.

Instantly he wheeled about, and dashing the spurs into his flanks he drove him at full speed down toward where the troop's horses were corralled.

In a few moments he dashed out of the willow thicket, mounted upon his own splendid horse Lucifer, and went off like a rocket in pursuit of the outlaw.

"Don't mind me, Captain Taylor, for I want that man's scalp, and you have won the fight," called out Buffalo Bill as he dashed by Captain Taylor, who with his men had now come out of ambush and were preparing to mount their horses as they were brought up by the men in charge of them, to make a show of pursuit of the Indians.

Captain Taylor made reply but Buffalo Bill did not hear him as he dashed away, a lone pursuer upon the outlaw's trail.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER THE FIGHT.

THE red-skins had been rallied from their panic by the skill and cool courage of their young chief, Death Face.

He had quickly realized that the ambush had been ahead, that the scattering shots from the other shore showed but a small force in their rear for effect, and that his course was to recross and strike up the river bank for the upper ford, especially as a mile away there was a place where he could make a stand and beat back the soldiers on his track.

He picked up what wounded he could, but felt compelled to leave his dead, and in solid force crossed the river in spite of the double fire now poured upon him.

He saw that the outlaw chief had acted wisely in the course he had pursued, but then he could not have rallied his warriors to go in that direction, so did the next best thing and recrossed the river.

It was his intention to hurl his whole force upon the small party there and wipe them out; but this had been anticipated by Captain Taylor and Buffalo Bill, and orders had been given the men in charge of the horses to bring them up the moment they saw the Indians attempt to recross the stream.

This they did and the quick mounted pursuit saved the soldiers and scouts across the river.

Forcing his wounded on ahead, Death Face rallied his braves in the rear to retreat slowly and protect them, and showers of bullets and arrows were fired upon the soldiers as they crossed the river in chase.

But they did not dare tarry long, for from the rocks the little band on the ridge poured a hot fire upon them, forcing them to quicken their pace and give up all idea

of displacing them in the short time they had to do it in.

It was true that the red-skins emptied half a dozen saddles and brought down twice as many horses as the troopers crossed the river, but it did not check them and the pursuit was pressed so hotly by Captain Taylor that the Indians were forced into a run in spite of their young chief's cries for them to make a stand.

Reaching the rocks, where they could make a stand they halted, and Captain Taylor wisely and promptly checked the pursuit, knowing that he would lose heavily, and that the Indians would continue their flight for the upper ford, and thence on to their village as soon as night came on.

The captain too had seen several couriers ride on ahead, among the first to get across, and he knew this meant a rapid ride to the Indian village for aid, and that by morning, or soon after, a force would be upon him which he could not withstand.

There was then but one thing for him to do, and that was to make a show of pursuit until nightfall, and then retreat for the fort at once, taking the trail back the way the Indians had come, but dispatching scout-couriers the trail the troopers had come to the ford to warn Colonel Carr to send a force out in that direction to guard against a surprise, which in their frenzy the red-skins might attempt upon the fort, seeing that the soldiers had retreated in the other direction.

A council was quickly held among the officers, and two scouts were ordered, as soon as darkness came on, to recross the river and go back to the fort by the trail they had come, with dispatches for Colonel Carr, and to ride rapidly but not break their horses down.

The rest of the command, after burying their dead comrades, would retreat on the red-skins' trail to the river, carrying their wounded with them.

The red-skins' dead and wounded would be left to the care of the braves who would come in the morning to look after them, when they found the soldiers gone.

"But how about Cody?" said Captain Taylor, when their plans had been arranged.

"I fear he has placed himself in a very perilous position," the captain of the troop that had come with Captain Taylor's own command said.

"He went off on the track of that outlaw like a whirlwind; but it is a dangerous undertaking as the man being pursued can go into ambush and kill his pursuer."

"Yes, captain, and having gone up the river Buffalo Bill is on the side of the Indian village and if he pursues the outlaw far he will be between the red skins coming from their camps and those now in retreat," a lieutenant said.

"Well, I shall leave a couple of scouts on the other side to watch for his return, and two men here, in case he should cross before those Indians yonder get up to the other ford and come down this side."

"I am sorry that he went, but the men I leave will know how to take care of themselves when morning comes, and their horses will have a good night's rest."

"As for ourselves, as it is growing dark, we will set out on the march, for we must get well beyond the ridge before we camp, and then be off again at dawn," said Captain Taylor.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MISSING SCOUT.

It was a strange coincidence that, as night was coming on, both Indians and soldiers were preparing to run away from each other.

The former feared, as the soldiers did not press the pursuit, they had other forces near who were marching around toward the other ford to catch them with overhanging cliffs on one side, a river on the other and between two squadrons of foes.

They longed to get across the river by the upper ford, and then they would make a stand until help came from their villages, help they had sent after already, and which would come in two columns, on the trails to both fords.

The soldiers were anxious to get away for they had no help, they knew their weakness and were well aware of the strength the In-

dians could bring against them within twelve hours.

By a night retreat they could go many miles before halting to camp for rest and food.

Then after another ride before dawn and after, by the time they halted for breakfast they would be many miles from the scene of conflict just about the time the Indian reinforcements were arriving there.

With such a start they had nothing to fear, for no matter if hundreds of warriors were in the saddle against them they would not dare venture far across the river in pursuit, after the bitter and deadly lessons they had lately learned.

The scouts left on the scene, with a night's rest for their horses, the captain was sure would easily distance all pursuit as far as the Indians would venture, for they would expect to be led into an ambush.

But it was the absence of Buffalo Bill that troubled Captain Taylor and all of his men.

The chief of scouts had dashed away in pursuit of his bitterest foe.

He had gone alone, and on the Indian side of the river, where small bands of hunters might be met at any moment.

He had gone in chase of a man who was skilled in border craft, cunning, fearless and dangerous, and was as artful as a red-skin.

A man who had had his band of outlaws wiped out by the very man who pursued him, who had been forced to fly to safety among the Indians, and whose treasures had been taken from him, and his wife also had gone with his enemies.

Was it a wonder then that he would seek revenge upon Buffalo Bill and risk life to get it?

The scout, anxious also to capture the outlaw chief, would strain every nerve and take chances that at another time he would not do.

These thoughts flashed through Captain Taylor's mind, and he told his officers how he felt regarding the safety of the scout, and they too shared his anxiety.

And yet, to have remained on the river bank awaiting his return would have been madness, so the order to march had been given as soon as darkness fell, and just as the Indians too were pulling out in hot haste for the upper ford.

The dead were carried along by the soldiers, to bury when they made their camp, and the wounded were cared for as well as circumstances would admit.

During the night march one of the worst of the wounded troopers died, but his body was strapped upon one of the captured Indian ponies and carried along with the others.

It was just an hour before midnight when the scout who was guiding, and who had been on the trail before, led the way to a camp where water, wood and grass were plentiful.

The tired horses were staked out, fires were built, supper put on, and graves were dug for the dead, while the surgeon dressed the wounds of those who had needed his aid most.

Then supper was served, sentinels placed and the tired troopers threw themselves down and slept soundly.

Buffalo Bill's scouts were the self-imposed guards, for like their chief they had wonderful powers of endurance and were glad to let the soldiers rest.

After four hours' rest they roused the camp, as ordered by Captain Taylor, and fifteen minutes after the march was again begun.

Until eight o'clock they held on, and then a halt was made for breakfast and a long rest, for there was no danger of pursuit then, and Captain Taylor was anxious to have the scouts overtake him.

It was nearly noon when they arrived, the two left on the ridge.

They reported the hasty retreat of the Indians under Death Face, the arrival of several hundred warriors on the other shore soon after sunrise, and the going of the two scouts left across the river, and seeing their signal that Buffalo Bill had not joined them during the night.

Nor had the scout joined the two scouts who brought in the report, and a gloom fell upon all for dread that Buffalo Bill had met his doom at last.

Captain Taylor called his officers together and held a council of war.

It was at last decided that as the expedition had been simply to ambush the retreating Indians and administer to them a severe lesson, this having been accomplished there was nothing left to be done but to return to the fort and report the result, with the fact that Buffalo Bill was missing, and, it was feared harm had befallen him.

Then several of the scouts came up and asked to be allowed to remain behind and search for their chief.

This request was granted, Captain Taylor calling for volunteers, and Hugh Hardin and four of his scout comrades went back on the trail in search of Buffalo Bill, while the troopers continued on toward Fort Advance.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNKNOWN FATE.

It was a sad march of the troopers back to the fort, for another of the wounded men died on the way, running the death-roll up to seven men, with twice as many wounded.

But they had accomplished their purpose, hit the red-skins a terrible blow, slaying many of them, wounding many more and capturing half a hundred ponies.

But there was gloom upon account of Buffalo Bill's disappearance, more sorrow being felt for the popular scout's fate than for the dead soldiers.

Soldiers could be replaced, there were many of them, but only one Buffalo Bill the Idol of Plainsmen and one whose fame was earned by deeds of desperate daring.

After an absence of five days the command came in sight of the fort.

All hoped to find Buffalo Bill there, and the first question of Captain Taylor was:

"Has Cody arrived?"

"No, Taylor, and we hoped he was with you, for his two men returned and reported him missing," answered the officer of the day.

Captain Taylor at once went to headquarters to report and Colonel Carr was seated upon his piazza and said quickly:

"Glad to see you back, Captain Taylor, and congratulate you upon your victory, which the scouts brought news of; but is Cody with you?"

"No, Colonel Carr, I did hope to find him here."

"No, and his two men reported that he went off alone in chase of the outlaw chief, Eagle."

"He did, sir, and has not been seen since."

"This is bad, very bad; but he is like a cat and may yet turn up, for I've set him down as dead many times, in fact he has nine times nine lives."

"I hope he may put in an appearance, for our victory was wholly owing to him, and it was one the red-skins will remember."

"We lost men killed and wounded, sir, for it was a hot fight for awhile when we pressed the Indians across the river; but we gained the day, though Cody's loss cast a damper over all."

"I felt it best to return to the fort, sir, over the Indians' trail, but I left Hugh Hardin and four other scouts to look for Buffalo Bill."

"Heaven grant they find him, and Hardin is the man to do it if any one can."

"If they do not return with him to-morrow I will send out another searching party, for Lieutenant Walter Worth has asked to go."

"It will be a good idea, sir; but I was glad to see Worth back again."

"Yes, and he has crowned himself with glory, for, guided by Buffalo Bill as you know, he rescued Jack Jessop and his passengers, among them being the sergeant's daughter."

"She is one of the most beautiful girls I ever beheld and who is going to raise the deuce with the young officers of the fort I fear for I cannot drive into their heads that she is only a sergeant's daughter."

"And the outlaw's wife is here too sir?"

"Yes, and another beautiful woman is she."

"She has been very ill, but is recovering rapidly, and is at the sergeant's quarters with his daughter, thus relieving me of having an outlaw's wife for a guest; but poor

woman she is a lady, refined and pure hearted, and was deceived in the man she married, so is wholly guiltless herself of any wrong.

"She has the deepest sympathy of all."

"And deserves it, sir; but, as she is ill, I hope the news will not reach her that Buffalo Bill went off on a hunt for her husband and on that account is missing."

"I trust not; but bad news travels fast, and the story will have gone the rounds of the fort by this time, as the soldiers have told it."

"I fear so, sir; but we noticed the stage trail as we came along, sir."

"Oh, yes, Jack Jessop took his coach out again, with no fear this time of either Red Hands or Indians, and he had as passengers back with him the two speculators, who had all they cared for of Wild West life, in their experience as captives of the outlaws."

"They say they will be content with investing their money East in future," and the colonel and Captain Taylor laughed heartily at the decision the two speculators had come to, the former going on to say:

"But they were both loud in their praise of the sergeant's daughter, her pluck, endurance and cheery nature under all danger, difficulties and hardships, while Lieutenant Ernest Leslie also sings her praises and in fact she is a very remarkable girl, one that Jack Jessop the driver says has got no equal for nerve."

"This is certainly a good report of her, sir."

"She deserves it, Taylor; but you need rest, so I'll not detain you, and again I congratulate you upon your success."

Thanking the colonel the captain retired to his quarters, where a few moments after Sergeant Fallon came and asked for an interview.

"I am happy to hear that your daughter was restored to you, sergeant, and trust that she is well, as also your invalid guest."

"Yes, sir, my daughter is well and loves the life here, while Mrs. Lamar is improving rapidly; but I came to ask you regarding the chief of scouts, sir, for it is said that he is thought to have been killed and by the outlaw chief?"

"It is only surmise, sergeant, as Cody dashed off in pursuit of the outlaw, and did not return."

"Five of his scouts are searching for him, and if they do not return with news of him to-morrow, the colonel will send out a search party after him."

"I should like to go along, sir, and have a hand in his rescue, for I owe more than life to him, sir, in returning to me my child."

"I will speak to the colonel for you then, and it will be Lieutenant Worth who commands the party."

"Then if Buffalo Bill can be found, sir, he is the one to do it," earnestly said the sergeant, and he added:

"I will report to Mrs. Lamar and my daughter then, sir, that Buffalo Bill is only missing, for they urged me to come to you and ask about him, sir," and the sergeant returned to his quarters.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RETURN OF THE SEARCH PARTY.

ANXIOUSLY a watch was kept up by the sentinels and others at the fort, for some sign of the scout's return.

The fort was well situated on two sides of a swift-flowing and deep stream, and where the land sloped from it on every side.

It was well timbered in the inclosure of a dozen acres, and in the meadows below were gardens fenced in and corrals for the cattle and horses to placed, in threatened danger from an Indian raid.

Off on the hills near, the cowboys and horse-herders had their cabins, and down the valley was a settlement of several hundreds, with miners dwelling up in the mountains a few miles distant.

The fort was a strong one, with stockade walls and earthen breastworks, it was delightfully situated and surrounded by beautiful scenery, while game of all kinds abounded near, rendering it a most desirable post for officers and their families.

There were a number of officers' wives and children at the fort, a school for the lat-

ter, a chapel in which the chaplain officiated on Sunday, a dancing hall, and all sports were encouraged.

Colonel Carr was an ideal officer, a perfect disciplinarian, but courteous and kind to all, and life at Fort Advance, in spite of its dangerous situation, was much enjoyed by all dwellers there.

Buffalo Bill, as chief of scouts, and on account of his record and personal attractions as well, received the same respect and consideration bestowed upon a commissioned officer, and with one and all he was a favorite, so that the dread that he had met with death at the hands of the outlaw chief, cast a damper upon all.

His late brilliant deeds had endeared him still more to all, and there was a cloud of gloom hovering about every cabin and campfire as long as his fate was unknown and it was feared that he had met his death.

Particularly did his corps of scouts grieve for him, and though he had been reported killed and looked upon as dead time and again before, yet it seemed now that he must have been slain, or why had he not returned to camp?

If he had been captured by the Indians, all knew what a terrible fate would be his.

That the five scouts who had gone back to look for some trace of him did not return, looked ominous for Buffalo Bill, the men in the barracks thought.

In the officers' club the missing scout was the theme of conversation, and all felt glad when it was known that Lieutenant Walter Worth had volunteered to go out with a party and find him, or know what had befallen him.

That dashing young officer was the idol of the soldiers, and he had a way of getting at bottom facts, when sent on any mission, and of accomplishing such wonders that the truth would soon be known if he started out in search of the chief of scouts, and Colonel Carr had promised to allow him to go, if the five men then absent did not return that day.

In the home of Sergeant Fallon the tension felt was great regarding Buffalo Bill's not coming in.

The part the scout had taken in the rescue of Lucille Fallon had greatly endeared him to the sergeant, while his daughter had learned to admire the brave man, and was drawn toward him by ties of the strongest friendship.

The outlaw's wife, Mildred Lamar, had nearly regained her strength again, after her long sickness, but the suspense she was in could not but retard her recovery.

She had once dearly loved her husband, believing him noble and true; but, her idol had been shattered when she found him out to be a vile murderer and robber.

Freed from him by going to the fort with his fair captive, Lucille Fallon, she had hoped never to hear of him again.

But in vain the hope, for the truth became known to her that he had allied himself with Indians, openly leading them against Lieutenant Worth and Buffalo Bill's rescue-party, and then, when attacked by Captain Taylor's command he had been at their head with the young chief Death Face.

Pursued by Buffalo Bill the fate of the scout and the outlaw chief was unknown, and hence the suspense fell heavily upon the wife, more so than upon others.

Had she known that her lawless husband was dead she could have rested content, but that he had killed Buffalo Bill and still lived on for further red deeds was a cruel burden to bear.

As night came on the sentinel reported a party of horsemen coming down the mountain trail.

They were counted and found to be five in number.

They were then recognized as Hugh Hardin and his four comrades, left behind to find their chief.

Buffalo Bill was not along.

Upon arrival at the fort Hugh Hardin went to headquarters to make his report.

They had scouted up and down the river, and discovered that the Indians had placed camps of sentinels at each of the three fords, so that they could not cross to reconnoiter on the other side.

They had found no trace of Buffalo Bill, and in vain tried to capture a brave to learn,

if they could, if he had been killed or captured.

That the outlaw chief, Captain Eagle, had not been killed was certain, for all of the scouts had seen him with Chief Death Face, ride to the red-skin camp at the ford and scan the shores across the river with his glass.

The dead Indians and the wounded had all been removed by their comrades, and no one else than themselves, the five scouts, had been seen on the other shore of the river.

Believing, and hoping that Buffalo Bill had escaped death or capture, they had returned to the fort trusting to find him there and to make their report.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NOT DEAD.

COLONEL CARR listened to the report of Scout Hugh Hardin with a clouded brow.

It seemed to foreshadow the fate of Buffalo Bill.

"Well, Hardin, you have done your duty, all that you could do, and were right in returning."

"But you are sure that it was the outlaw chief that you saw?"

"Yes, sir."

"There could be no mistake?"

"None, sir, for we all looked at him closely through my glass, and we were just across the river from him."

"He came up to the Indian camp with Death Face, and seemed to be giving orders, and I guess he was the one to establish the camps at the fords."

"How many red-skins were in the sentinel camps?"

"All of fifty, sir."

"At each ford?"

"Yes, sir."

"You went to each ford?"

"We did, sir."

"And they just camped there?"

"Yes, sir, but they had scouts patrolling up and down the river, we could see, and once or twice we thought they were coming across, and then we intended to capture them; but they thought better of it and never ventured more than half way over."

"I don't like the idea of your seeing the outlaw leader."

"No, sir, nor do I, for it shows that Chief Cody did not kill him."

"That is certain."

"Had he done so, Cody might have had to go into hiding and be all right until he could escape; but seeing the chief leads to the belief, knowing how cunning and treacherous he is, yes and plucky too, I must admit, that Cody met death at his hands, for your chief is not one to give up a trail he has started upon, and he was certainly hot upon the heels of that man Eagle when he was last seen by Captain Taylor."

"He was, sir, as I also saw, and more, he was mounted upon his horse Lucifer, the fleetest animal in the Wild West, sir."

The colonel shook his head sadly, and soon after dismissed the scout, just as Lieutenant Worth made his appearance.

"Pardon me, Colonel Carr, but I have come to again request, sir, that I may go in search of Scout Cody?"

"I was just going to send for you, Lieutenant Worth."

"Sit down, and we will talk it over."

"I have just had a report from Scout Hardin that he could find no trace of his chief, that the three fords are guarded, on the other side of the river by fifty Indians, and he saw both the red-skin chief and the outlaw Eagle, visiting these sentinel posts."

"That means, sir, that the outlaw captain was not killed?"

"Yes, he is not dead."

"The scouts were sure?"

"Yes."

"It looks as though Buffalo Bill might have been killed then by the outlaw?"

"I am sorry to say it has that appearance, Worth."

"May I not go, sir, and try to ascertain the real situation?"

"You may do so; but what is your idea about going?"

"Sergeant Fallon is anxious to go, sir, so Captain Taylor informs me, and I would wish for no better man."

"Very true; but you surely would not go only with the sergeant?"

"No, sir, for I would like to have Scouts Will Palmer, Hugh Hardin and four others of their comrades whom these two may select, along with Corporal Kane and eight of my troop, sir, picked men and horses all of them."

"That would give you sixteen men under your command?"

"Yes, sir, six of whom are Buffalo Bill's own men, nine of my own troop and Sergeant Fallon, who is a host in himself, sir."

"Very true," and the colonel was silent a moment in thought.

Then he said:

"Lieutenant Worth, I have every confidence in the world in you, and I also feel that a small force is better than a large one, so I am willing you shall go, but I desire to send with you also Surgeon Denmead, for you may need his services."

"Then too I will send an officer, your inferior in rank of course, with thirty men and a light gun to be within call, close call, should you need aid, on the trail Buffalo Bill led Captain Taylor by, and a like number with a gun, by the trail Taylor returned by, to camp at certain points you may designate where they can be called upon if necessary, or you can retreat to."

"Of course, with each command I will send several scouts, and thus aided, by knowing you have relief at hand, you can venture much more than otherwise would be prudent, and you know the Indians are just now in a frenzied mood at their losses and defeats."

"I thank you, Colonel Carr, for your kindness, for this aid you give me will be of great benefit, sir."

"I will talk over the matter with Hardin and Palmer, and decide upon the camps for the relief forces to remain and inform you, sir, and I would like to make a start to-night, with your leave, they starting at dawn."

"You can do so, starting at your will."

"I will now go and see the sergeant, sir, and—"

"Had I not better send my orderly, lieutenant?" asked the colonel with a sly twinkle in his eyes.

"No, thank you, sir, I'll not trouble you," was the innocent response of the young officer.

The colonel laughed, and Walter Worth's face flushed, while his commander said:

"The orderly would have done, had not the sergeant had a pretty daughter, lieutenant; but go ahead on the errand yourself, though I really believe that you will find the sergeant at the armory."

Walter Worth smiled faintly and with a salute departed from headquarters, muttering to himself:

"Now it would be all right for me to go to Fallon's home if he were a commissioned officer; but as it is, there is no better home in the fort, one more refined in its appointments, or where dwells a more beautiful girl, or accomplished young lady, if she is a sergeant's daughter."

"But now to find Buffalo Bill, for Lucille Fallon has begged me to do so; but I do not like this report of Scout Hardin, that the outlaw chief is not dead."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SERGEANT'S HOME, TRAILING THE LOST SCOUT.

LIEUTENANT WALTER WORTH did go by the quarters of the sergeant, after leaving Colonel Carr.

He had been the commander of the party that had rescued Lucille Fallon and the other prisoners, and had been thrown much with the beautiful girl.

A dashing, handsome fellow, with courage that had been severely tried, a lion in battle, at night around the camp-fire he was a genial comrade, ever courteous, and with a fine tenor voice, playing the guitar well, and a splendid conversationalist, he was the very one to catch the eye of a maiden and become a hero to her.

He had half the young girls at the fort in love with him, was popular with the married ladies, old and young, and though lectured frequently by them was never looked

upon as a fast man in the real sense of the word.

He was a favorite also with his brother officers, while his men would follow him wherever he bade them do so, and held perfect confidence in his ability as an officer as well.

After his return with the stage-coach passengers, rescued from the Red Hands, with Buffalo Bill, he was regarded as having again made a hero of himself.

Once in the fort, however, and though courteous, he could not be regarded as being on visiting terms with the sergeant's daughter.

Out of respect to Sergeant Fallon the officers had called once upon his daughter, to congratulate her upon her rescue, and welcome her to the fort, but that must end all social intercourse of course.

Walter Worth, however, to see how the outlaw's wife was convalescing, had been to the cabin several times, and his brother officers began already to gossip over the fact.

The sergeant's home was certainly as attractive as any in the fort, after Lucille had unpacked her traps and beautified it in various ways, while, as far as the occupants went, save for rank, the difference between a commissioned and non-commissioned officer, the sergeant, his daughter and Mrs. Lamar were as thoroughly refined, educated and entertaining as any other household of the fort, and this had been admitted by all the officers and their wives who had gone there.

When Lieutenant Worth now visited the quarters, he was met by old Polly, the negress, who with Uncle Toby had assumed the household duties there at the request of Mrs. Lamar.

"Walk in, sah; but de sergeant he am not here, though Missy Lucille is, and my mistis, too, sah."

"I would like to see Miss Fallon a moment, if agreeable to her, Aunt Polly," said the young officer.

"Yas, sah, it's agreeable I knows," and ushering him into the little parlor Aunt Polly, who had the highest admiration for the lieutenant, went to acquaint Lucille with his presence.

The sergeant's daughter came in just as she was, with a most becoming morning gown on.

She looked very beautiful, and in her sweet, fascinating manner received the lieutenant.

She did not offer her hand, for she had already learned the difference in rank, but took his when he extended it, and asked:

"Will you be seated, Lieutenant Worth, for Mrs. Lamar wishes to see you, sir."

"Thank you, I will for a few minutes, but your father is not here?"

"No, sir, he is over at the arsenal on duty. I will send Uncle Toby after him if you desire it."

"Please do so, and tell him to come at once."

Uncle Toby was dispatched on his errand, and re-entering the room Lucille asked:

"Will you tell me, Lieutenant Worth, if the scouts heard or found anything of Chief Cody?"

"Nothing, I regret to say."

"It will be terrible if harm has befallen him, sir, for he is a man that cannot be replaced."

"No, Cody's match could not be found, that is certain: but I am going to-night in search of him, and your father is to accompany me."

"He will be so glad to do so: but—" and after a moment of hesitation she said:

"But you are going upon a very dangerous errand, Lieutenant Worth, and I hope you will not venture too much, for you know my father will be with you; but here is Mrs. Lamar."

As Lucille spoke, the same beautiful woman who had been seen upon the piazza of her island retreat, came into the room.

She was pale, and looked worn and weak; but she greeted the officer pleasantly and said:

"I wish to thank you, Lieutenant Worth, now that I am, I may say, well again, for all your kindness to me in the dangerous march here—a brother could not have done more for me, and always will I remember you with gratitude."

"Do not speak of it, Mrs. Lamar, for I assure you I only did my duty as a soldier and a man."

"But there is a way of doing one's duty, sir, that cannot but impress the one who receives a kindness, and I have felt all your goodness to me; but now let me ask if there is any news of the chief of scouts?"

"None, I regret to say, but I may tell you that—that your—"

"My husband, the outlaw, Lieutenant Worth, for such he is," said Mrs. Lamar, bitterly.

"Well, Mrs. Lamar, he was seen by the scouts, so is not dead, and now I am going out to try and find Cody."

"I hope that you will take a large force with you, sir."

"On the contrary, I go with Surgeon Denmead, Sergeant Fallon, a corporal and eight men and six scouts, all being picked men, while I will also be supported, for there is no knowing what may happen—oh! here is the sergeant now," and Sergeant Fallon entered the room, saluting as he did so.

The two then had a conversation together, the ladies, at the request of the lieutenant, remaining, while the sergeant remained standing, though requested by the officer to be seated.

It took the lieutenant some time to arrange matters, for his visit lasted half-an-hour; two hours after he rode away from the fort at the head of his little command to go on the search for Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XX.

A CLEVER DEVICE.

LIEUTENANT WORTH rode away from the fort with his command while the sun was yet two hours high.

He wished to press on to a camping-ground thirty miles away, and with an early start the following morning, be able to reach the scene of the late battle while it was broad daylight.

With his scouts well ahead, they would soon discover if the Indians were yet encamped at the ford, and the two other crossings could be reconnoitered to discover if they were also guarded.

If the three crossings of the river were guarded, then there must be some way planned to capture a red-skin, or get across to the other shore and begin a scout in search of Buffalo Bill.

The camping-place was reached in good time, supper was had, guards placed, and the command was soon fast asleep.

But they made an early start, and it was while the sun was yet an hour above the horizon that the halt was called within a few miles of the center of the three fords, to await the reports of the scouts sent to see if they were still guarded.

The scout sent to the lower ford first returned and reported having seen the Indians encamped on the other shore, for he had climbed a high tree and looking over a ridge had seen half-a-hundred ponies staked out, but no red-skin visible.

The next scout to report was Will Palmer, who had gone to the middle ford, the main trail across the river, and the scene of Captain Taylor's fight with the Indians.

He had surveyed the other shore with his glass and had discovered an Indian sentinel among the rocks, but could not see others though he was sure they were there.

It was just at sunset when the third scout returned.

He had gone to the upper of the three fords, riding ahead of the command slowly in the morning, and he had discovered a camp of about half a hundred Indians on the other shore.

This proved that the Indians were still guarding the fords, either from the fact that they expected a raid from the soldiers in force, or knew that Buffalo Bill was across the river and they wished to capture him, for the banks of the stream were such that only crossings at the three fords could be made for many long miles.

As he was now convinced that there was no chance of crossing the river save by strategy, Lieutenant Worth decided to move his command to a good camping-place a mile back from the center ford and from there send his scouts out to work.

The rendezvous for the two commands to come to his support were to be on the river trail, and the one across country, some twenty miles away from his camping-place.

The camp was reached after nightfall, but Hugh Hardin knew it well and it was found to be a very secure hiding-place, with fine pasturage for the horses, a good stream and wood in plenty, though cooking could only be done at night, as the smoke in the daytime would betray them to the Indians.

That night the lieutenant, leaving Sergeant Fallon in command, went with Scouts Hardin and Palmer and reconnoitered to the ford.

They saw the glimmer of the Indian camp-fires upon the other side, and the young officer said:

"I shall to-morrow see if we cannot trap a red-skin, for some of them must cross to this side."

"We will be in wait for them."

So the next day the scouts and soldiers were in ambush all day, but no red-skin came across the stream, though at times a dozen or more were discovered on the other side.

"May I suggest a plan to catch one, sir?" said Sergeant Fallon.

"Certainly, sergeant."

"My horse is trained, sir, and I will take position myself to-morrow before dawn down among the rocks, and he will stay about feeding near me."

"He will come at my low call, and the red-skins seeing him, and thinking he is a stray, animal will come across to catch him."

"Seeing them he will draw near to me and I can catch one with a lasso, for hardly will more than one come across, but should more come I will retreat up the trail, the horse will follow and he will draw them into an ambush."

"The very thing to be done, sergeant, and you shall carry it out as you have planned," said the lieutenant.

The next morning the sergeant was in position before day-break, and his horse, stripped of saddle and bridle, was feeding near him.

The position chosen was a good one, for from the other side no one could see what occurred unless they were just directly opposite.

It was about an hour after sunrise when from his point of observation Lieutenant Worth saw an Indian horseman ride into view on the other side.

He came down to the river, rode in, and had his lariat in hand as he drew toward the shore when his gaze fell upon the sergeant's horse calmly feeding.

Reaching the bank he came slowly forward, all ready to throw his coil, and as he drew near the horse the animal slowly retreated before him, but came to a halt after going a short distance and the red-skin prepared to catch him.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SERGEANT'S PRISONER.

THE red-skin eyed the horse anxiously and longingly as he went toward him.

He had seen the animal from across the river, and saying nothing to his companions had mounted his own pony and ridden over to capture a prize.

Being the sentinel on duty he could not be seen from the camp of the other Indians over in the meadow beyond the willows, and he was anxious to get possession of his prize before any one else knew of its being there.

That the horse had gotten away from the soldiers, after the battle, he believed, and he certainly had the appearance of being a very fine animal.

So, when he got near the horse, which stood calmly surveying him, he coiled his long lariat and prepared to catch him.

His lariat flew from his hand with great force, and straight as an arrow went toward the head of the horse.

But the sergeant's horse seemed trained to avoid a noose, for he quickly ducked his head and the coil struck him on the neck and failed to catch.

But at the same instant there came a whizzing sound from one side of the red-skin, a

dark object floated in the air, a noose encircled the body of the Indian, and with a sharp twang he was dragged from the back of his horse to the ground.

The pony wheeling in fright, the red-skin fell heavily, with stunning force, and before he could realize what had happened there bounded a form toward him, a quick turn of the lasso was taken around his neck and he was choked so as to prevent an outcry or resistance.

Raising him in his strong arms the sergeant bore him back into the canyon, where Lieutenant Worth and Scout Palmer was, having seen the clever capture.

"I'll bring his pony in too, sir," said Sergeant Fallon, and in a short while he came back with his own and the Indian's pony and suggested that they take the prisoner beyond the hearing of an outcry, should he attempt to give warning of danger to his comrades.

So the prisoner was taken quickly back to the camp, and there, under the care of Surgeon Denmead, rallied from the choking he had received from the sergeant.

To the surprise of the lieutenant and those about him, who did not know that he spoke the Indian tongue, the sergeant addressed his captive in Cheyenne, speaking fluently.

The Cheyenne seemed surprised at hearing his native language spoken by a pale-face, then glanced fixedly into his face for a moment and responded to what the sergeant had said to him.

For a few minutes the two talked together, only the Scout Hugh Hardin able now and then to pick up a word.

Then the sergeant turned to Lieutenant Worth and said:

"I told him, sir, that we knew of his camp across the river, and at the other fords, but that we were searching for Pa-e-has-ka* and unless he told me the truth about him I would scalp him and send him back to his people a disgraced squaw."

"And what does he say, sergeant?"

"That he only knows that the scout pursued the white outlaw chief, on the day of the battle, for he was with Death Face in that fight, belonging to the young chief's band, and that the Red Hand stated that he had gone on to the Indian village, to bring more warriors to the scene, and had not seen the chief of scouts."

"Do you believe him, sergeant?"

"I do, sir, for he would only be too glad to let me know that Buffalo Bill had been killed or captured."

"He says also, sir, that when the outlaw captain heard that Buffalo Bill had gone in chase of him, and had not crossed the river with the troops, he asked Death Face to send his young warriors on his trail and capture him, but all had come in with the same report, that they had tracked the scout to a spot on the river-bank, where the trail ended, for either the horse had been forced to leap from the cliff, or he had been thrown off for some purpose, and that Buffalo Bill had taken the chances of swimming across the stream, where the river was wide and dashed along at a rapid rate, though upon the other shore it was possible to land, if he reached it."

"Indian scouts had gone up to the spot on the other shore, and searched for some sign of a trail where a horse or man had left the water, but none was found, and it was the belief of Chief Death Face, and also of Captain Eagle that the great scout had attempted to swim across the river and both he and his horse had been drowned."

"Then that means that Buffalo Bill is dead," sadly said Lieutenant Worth.

"On the contrary, sir, it looks to me as though Buffalo Bill was alive and unharmed, knowing the man as I do," was the response of Sergeant Fallon.

CHAPTER XXII.

A VOLUNTEER TRAILER.

THAT the report of the Indian prisoner cast a gloom over all in the little command was certain.

In spite of the sergeant's hope of Buffalo Bill's being all right, though naturally in the greatest danger, the men seemed to believe that the scout had at last met his fate.

* Buffalo Bill is called by the Indians Pa-e-has-ka, which means Long Hair. THE AUTHOR.

He was as cunning as an Indian in all border craft, it was true, with undaunted pluck and endurance, added to superior intelligence also to aid him, they agreed; but he had gone off on the trail of the outlaw chief, missed him, and completely hemmed in, he had taken the chances of crossing the river by swimming.

Had he done so, it was argued, it was on the very day of the fight, the night following, or the next morning.

If he had gotten across he surely, had his horse failed in the swim, would have reached the fort on foot some time before.

Not doing so it looked bad for the scout.

Even his own men were doubtful now of his safety, and a general talk was held, the young lieutenant anxious to discover if some one might not be able to advance a theory which escaped the scouts' minds, his own and the sergeant's.

But the "talk" resulted in no new discoveries, and the lieutenant turned again to the sergeant.

"You still cling to a belief in Cody's safety, sergeant?"

"I do, sir."

"Upon what basis?"

"Well, sir, the Indian prisoner there may not have told the truth, but he appears to have done so, and the presence of the outlaw chief alive proves that he was not met by the scout and killed."

"Had he killed Buffalo Bill the Indians would have been very triumphant in their bearing, as well as aggressive, and such would have been the case had they captured him."

"But on the contrary they are lying quiet at the fords, as though only to guard against an advance upon their village, and this Indian tells what appears to me to be a very straight story."

"True, but the scout is human and may have drowned crossing the river."

"Yes, sir; but Buffalo Bill, daring as he is, would not have attempted to swim the river without a fair chance that he could make it."

"With the Indians excited, frightened and defeated, he would have done nothing rash without being forced to it, and had they driven him to the cliff, where he was forced to jump over, this red-skin would have known it and been only too glad to tell."

"No, sir, the scout would have tried to make his way up the river and reach the ford above, before he took such a desperate chance as a leap from the cliff."

"Then where do you think he is?"

"Lying quiet somewhere, sir, until he can make his way out of the peril he is in from being completely surrounded."

"But some of those keen-eyed red-skins would have surely found him."

"True, sir, they might have found ninety-nine men in a hundred, but they are on the trail of one who can out-Injun an Injun, as the men say, and who knows his danger and can cover up his tracks."

"You give me hope again, sergeant."

"You know, lieutenant, all said that the coach went down that night of storm with the bridge, except one."

"Yes."

"That one exception was Buffalo Bill."

"That is so."

"He quietly held his peace, went to work and found out just what had become of the coach."

"He has been reported slain scores of times, he has been lost also to view time and again, has been shot at, tracked, threatened and yet always turns up smiling, and I do not believe he is now dead, for his past record is against the thought in my mind, sir."

"But the pitcher went once too often to the well, sergeant."

"Very true, sir; but I have a plan to propose, sir, if you please."

"Out with it, sergeant."

"I have had some experience with Indians, sir, and I speak their language well."

"You certainly do."

"Red-skins' togs which I brought along with me, paint, and feathers will do the balance, for I came prepared for a disguise if necessary, while I have here the Indian pony."

"Well?"

"You can keep him a prisoner here, sir, for no other red-skin saw him come across the river, and it will not be known what be-

came of him, and I can cross at dark and once on the other side I can take care of myself."

The lieutenant shook his head, and not heeding it the sergeant went on to say:

"When it is dawn I can take the trail that Buffalo Bill went, and I will have a look at the cliff and the surrounding country, and I can get at an idea of what the scout did from putting myself in his place."

"And you will meet with his fate, for I can hardly hope that he is alive."

"I will not meet with any danger that I cannot rescue myself from, sir."

"Don't be over confident, sergeant."

Sergeant Fallon made no immediate reply; but after a moment's thought arose and said:

"May I speak to you apart, sir?"

The lieutenant walked aside with Sergeant Fallon who said:

"Lieutenant Worth, I am not a man who is seeking fame through reckless disregard of life, for now, sir, I have much, everything to live for; but I know Wild West thoroughly, better than you know, I have dwelt in Indian villages, and I assure you, sir, that, should I be captured by the red-skins I have a means of protecting myself which I cannot explain to you, sir, but it is sure."

"No, no, sergeant, you must not take any such risks," was the determined response of the young officer, and the vision of Lucille Fallon rose before him as he spoke.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TEST OF A SECRET.

AGAIN the sergeant was silent after the words of the lieutenant, who plainly meant that he should not go upon a foolhardy expedition, as he regarded it.

But, as though determined to carry his point Sergeant Fallon said:

"Lieutenant Worth, Buffalo Bill has risked his life hundreds of times for others, he saved my daughter from the Red Hands, and he is now in desperate danger from which I may be able to help him escape."

"But how, sergeant?"

"I will show you, sir, by having that Indian come here, and talk with him."

"You watch closely, though not appearing to do so, just what I do, and the result on him, and you will discover that I hold a secret power, which I can and will exert, if forced to do so by being captured, or brought face to face with the Indians."

"You always were a mystery, sergeant, and your words but deepen the riddle."

"I have been a mystery at times to myself, sir; but some time in the future the clouds may pass away and I may be better known."

"The past with me is buried, or I hope soon will be, in the grave of forgetfulness, memories and heartaches will no longer haunt me and I will live for the future and what it holds in store for me; but, pardon me lieutenant, for I had no desire to speak of myself, sir, so please forget my words, and now I will give you the test of a secret power that I hold over the red-skins."

The sergeant then walked over to where the red-skin was, and leading him apart, but where the lieutenant, but no one else could see what was done, he began to talk to him.

The Indian aroused, looked surprised, and the sergeant threw open his uniform jacket, unfastened his shirt, and exposed his breast to the gaze of the prisoner.

That there was something there was evident, from the actions of the Indian, though what it was Lieutenant Worth could not see.

The red-skin gazed an instant, then raised his hands to his forehead, clasping them there while he bent his head until it was on a level with the sergeant's broad chest.

His feet were manacled, but his hands were free, and the action was one of deep respect, almost awe and admiration.

The sergeant quickly fastened his shirt again, buttoned up his jacket and then held a long conversation with the Indian, after which he returned him to his place, under guard of a soldier.

It was not until half-an-hour had passed that he rejoined the lieutenant at a place where the red-skin could not see them talking together, for he had made a signal which the officer understood and so walked away to see him alone.

"May I ask, sir, if you saw anything strange in my interview with that red-skin?"

"Yes, I saw that you made some sign, showed him some mark, and that he at once acknowledged it with signs of perfect respect."

"True, sir, and just as he did others of his tribe, and the Shoshones will do as well, so I again ask, sir, to be allowed to carry out my plan to go on a long scout in search of Buffalo Bill."

"You are a strange man, Sergeant Fallon; but I have perfect trust in you, and faith that you know just what you are about, so I will no longer withhold my consent, though I feel that you take desperate chances in what you do."

"Life itself, sir, is a desperate chance," was the reply of the sergeant, and he at once began his arrangements for his departure, for night was near at hand.

When he was ready for his ride into the Indian lines, he appeared before the lieutenant, who started as he suddenly beheld him before him, for on the instant he supposed it was an Indian chief.

The sergeant had so skillfully painted his face, neck and hands that he looked the Indian out and out, and this was added to by a war-bonnet of bright red feathers, such as only a head chief could wear, and which he had brought with him from the fort, while hung from his shoulders was a robe of white beaver-skins, a dozen being in it at least.

"I am ready, sir, and I will take my own horse, for riding the pony of the red-skin might give me too much to explain, if I am seen."

"You seem to know your business well, sergeant, so I have no suggestions to make, for this is your personal—no, no, I will not say this, but instead that you are the doctor."

The sergeant smiled and replied:

"I hope to bring the patient back to life, sir; but may I ask you to do me the favor to take charge of this belt for me, and should I not return, give it to my daughter to open in your presence."

"I will guard it safely, sergeant, and do as you request," and the officer took the belt, one that was made of buckskin, and seemed to be well filled with papers neatly placed in it so as not to inconvenience the wearer.

"It is of value, sir, please."

"I will buckle it on under my fatigue coat and not part with it, sergeant, until I place it in your daughter's hands, which I sincerely hope I shall not have to do; but I see that you have avoided the red-skin."

"I did not wish him to see me in this rig, sir, and may I ask that you put a double guard upon him to prevent any possibility of escape?"

"I will see to it that he does not, for if you did get into trouble over there, his return to his people might complicate matters."

"Decidedly, sir; but should I not return in three days, you need not delay longer here, only do not give either Buffalo Bill or myself up as dead until you know it to be a fact," and with a grasp of the lieutenant's hand Sergeant Fallon mounted his horse and rode down toward the river in the gathering gloom of night.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SCOUT'S PURSUIT.

It will be well now to follow on the trail of Buffalo Bill, when he dashed away in hot pursuit of Captain Eagle, the leader of the Red Hands.

Having to ride the Indian pony he had captured, to the corral, and there get his own matchless horse Lucifer, had delayed him so that the outlaw had all of ten minutes' start of him.

But Buffalo Bill, in his lone scouting expeditions, had ventured into the very neighborhood of the Indian village, and he knew the country thereabout well.

He was aware that the chief could only retreat by one trail up the river for miles, and then, by a flank movement would reach the other ford.

From it the trail would lead to the Indian village and that would be the way the chief would doubtless go.

As there was no turning off point, speed was what would be required to overtake the outlaw, and the scout was anxious to come

up with him as soon as possible and end the affair.

He felt glad that it would be a death shot for the outlaw, rather than capture and being taken to the fort where he would be hanged, thus bringing a deeper sorrow upon his unfortunate wife.

Under other circumstances, were it not for that poor wife, the scout would have been more than content to let the outlaw suffer the penalty for his many crimes as he justly deserved, at the rope's end.

But now, should he come up with him, it would be a duel to the death between them.

The trail of the outlaw in his flight, showed that he was urging his horse to his fullest speed.

Coming to a place among steep cliffs on either side, the scout saw that there was no trace of a trail.

But the outlaw could not have turned off, and so must have gone on, only the nature of the ground preventing any hoof-tracks being made.

Noticing ahead that there were places among the rocks where a horse and man could hide, Buffalo Bill went more cautiously.

The outlaw would doubtless expect to be pursued, and therefore he would prepare against a foe.

But the scout went on, though with greater caution only.

Did it come to a trial of speed he knew that Lucifer was more than a match for even the far-famed fleet steed of Captain Eagle.

The nature of the ground still prevented any trace of the trail being seen until suddenly the scout came to where it was revealed again.

It led on ahead along a canyon for a short distance, and then there was a cliff on the one side, and, a hundred yards away the bank of the river.

The scout halted for a moment, and then a search showed that the trail of the outlaw's horse continued on around the cliff, here and there revealed where there were patches of earth covering the rocky ground.

It was not over three miles to the upper ford, and Buffalo Bill concluded that the outlaw must be all of a mile ahead of him.

So he decided to ride on to the upper ford, and if he did not come up with him to cross, make a wide detour so as not to meet the retreating Indians on the other side, for he had seen them turn up the bank of the river, and thus regain Captain Taylor's command again at the lower ford, for they would remain there all night, he supposed, or retreating would march slowly, as there were wounded to carry along.

But he hoped that the outlaw would come to a halt, or he would overtake him, and thus bring on a duel between them, for there was a feud of long standing between Buffalo Bill and the Red Hand Riders, and he was more than willing to take his chances in an encounter with the chief.

Just as he started on again, happening to glance over toward the river, Buffalo Bill was startled to see the outlaw ride into view, and coming down the river.

This seemed to indicate that he had doubled on his trail on ahead, ridden over to the river and followed along the edge of the cliff as though to return to the lower ford, when believing he was not followed.

He did not see the scout, that was certain, but rode leisurely along, having just come into view from riding out of a ravine which he had to cross to continue on along the bank.

Buffalo Bill waited until he got directly opposite to him, so that he would not be able to dash at once to cover, and then he prepared to act.

He could have dropped the man from his saddle without a word; but he was too brave a man to take an advantage even of the outlaw.

No, he would give him a warning at least of his presence, and that it must be a fight to the death between them.

The outlaw's gaze was across the river, as he rode along, as though he was looking in that direction for danger, little dreaming that it was so near at hand.

"Hands up, pard!"

The voice of the scout rung out clear as a

bell, determined and threatening, and he had his rifle across his arm as he gave the ominous order.

Lucifer stood like a statue, facing the river, and the scout had the outlaw within four hundred feet of him, his rifle ready for use.

At the first word the outlaw's horse was reined back suddenly, and first dropping his hand upon his revolver, he then grasped his rifle and swung it round for quick use, wholly unmindful of the command to raise his hands that came from Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON A STRANGE TRAIL.

BUFFALO BILL felt that he had done his duty in warning the outlaw of his presence.

He had called out to him to raise his hands, with the hope that he would refuse, and refusing attempt to fight it out, for, as I have stated, he did not wish to capture him and have to carry him to the fort.

The outlaw did just what the scout expected him to do, that is, attempt to fire on him.

He saw that the distance was beyond revolver range, and so he grasped his rifle.

The scout was not hurried in his movements.

He could have fired at the end of his sentence.

But now as the outlaw had his rifle in hand he ran his eyes along the sights and pulled trigger.

The quick movement of the fugitive however startled his horse, and as he grasped the rein to restrain the animal, he did so with a jerk on the bit that seemed to madden the beast, as he reared wildly just as the scout pulled trigger.

The bullet sped on, but whether to a target in the horse or his rider, Buffalo Bill did not know, for the rearing animal staggered backward as the leaden messenger sped on its errand, and with a cry of fright almost human in its tones, went over the cliff.

There was a human cry too, as the rider went down with his horse, still in the saddle, and it came from the outlaw's lips.

Over the cliff with a crash went horse and rider, and Buffalo Bill cried:

"My God! they have plunged over together."

"That means the end of the chief of the Red Riders of the Overland."

With the utterance of his words he spurred forward at full speed, halting within a few feet of the edge of the cliff, leaped from the back of his horse and gazed over.

He saw nothing of the man, but the horse was struggling madly with the swiftly flowing waters.

But the animal lasted only an instant, and was rolled under by the current out of sight, just as the outlaw arose and threw up his arms in a mad struggle for life.

Could Buffalo Bill have saved that man's life then he would have done so, for he felt all the horror that comes to the one who looks on helpless to aid, and see a fellow-being drown.

A moment passed and horse and rider had disappeared forever from sight.

There was no doubt of their death, for the torrent of waters rushed on, and though the scout turned his glass down the stream they did not rise again.

For a moment Buffalo Bill stood in silence, his fine face saddened by what he had witnessed.

Then with a sigh, he said to his horse:

"The end has come, Lucifer, and we ran the outlaw chief to his death."

"Now to return to the ford—no!"

He paused, for he heard down the river afar off the cries of the Indians.

"What can it mean, for they seem to have recrossed and to be coming up this way."

"Can they have had reinforcements from their village near and thus forced the troops to retreat?"

The cries continued, and from his position they seemed to be on the side of the river where he was, but this was caused by the arching cliffs and a bend in the river.

To meet the Indian force on the trail he had just come meant certain death, so he would continue on to the upper ford.

Mounting, he went along the trail of the outlaw's horse, which was visible there,

It led a few hundred yards to a ravine, and here it was lost.

But some impulse caused the scout to ride down into the ravine, and the rocky surface left no trail.

He held on, supposing that the ravine would lead him out to the cliff trail again, and suddenly came to the river.

There he saw the trail of the outlaw's horse, as it came in view directly at the water's edge.

"Well, I did not know there was a break in the cliff banks along here that one could reach the river by."

"If the red-skins crowd me I can swim across, though I would not relish such an undertaking."

"But the outlaw rode into the river here, for it is shallow, and to have gained the cliff where I saw him, he must have come down the river, so I will go up."

With this, keeping close along under the high cliff banks, where there was a sand and gravel deposit, and the water was but a foot in depth, he held his way for several hundred yards.

Then he came to another chasm in the cliff, and he entered it, the rocky walls towering a hundred feet above his head, and the narrow passageway not five feet wide.

A stream, clear as glass, flowed down the chasm to the river, but here and there was the track of the outlaw's horse, so the scout held on.

At the mouth of the chasm where he had turned in, he saw up the river half a mile, landmarks that were familiar, revealing to him the upper ford.

After a ride of a quarter of a mile up the chasm it suddenly spread out into a veritable bowl, for it was a couple of acres in size, surrounded by precipitous cliffs hundreds of feet high, and which a squirrel could not climb, the edges all fringed with pines.

But the bowl was like a garden of beauty, a bit of meadowland dotted with trees, with a deep, clear pool in it, into which from the cliff above fell a veil-like fall of water.

The scout halted his horse and looked long and earnestly about him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A DOUBLE DISCOVERY.

BUFFALO BILL, in his surprise, did not dismount from his horse for full ten minutes, but stood gazing about him.

Then he made a circuit on horseback of the little garden spot among the cliffs, and saw that it was utterly impossible for any one to leave, even on foot, save by the way he had come into the hidden dell.

"How on earth did that outlaw get off the trail on which I had pursued him, and come down there on the cliff where he met his doom?" asked Buffalo Bill of himself.

Then he saw what surprised him still more.

It was a shelter of pine boughs at the head of the dell, and by it were the remains of a camp-fire, the ashes still warm.

"Well!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill in surprise, and he at once staked his horse out and began a further search of the place.

There was evidence of some one having spent several days there at least, as the ashes of the camp-fire revealed, and the spots fed over by a horse staked out.

Going again to the entrance to the little canyon, Buffalo Bill from there again made a detour on foot, but with the same result, to see that there was but one entrance and exit.

Returning to his horse he mounted and rode down to the entrance to the canyon at the river.

There he saw traces of there having been a horse make a landing on the gravel bar above the mouth of the chasm.

The tracks were still there upon the upper edge of the bar, for there it ended, shelving off into deep water.

Going back down the stream, on the bar, the way he had come, Buffalo Bill took in the whole way carefully, and reaching the little ravine went up it to where he had turned in.

From that point two trails were visible, that of the outlaw's horse going on down the bank, and his own coming to it.

"Why this looks like the same trail, would be taken for your own tracks, Lucifer, showing apparently that you had come this far, turned and gone back again."

"This is lucky, for the Indians will see it, following my trail to the river, then here, back to the cliff and their keen eyes will soon read that the horse went over there."

"They will think I lost my head, backed you over, good horse, and struck out afoot; but they are mistaken."

"Now, how on earth did the outlaw chief reach that place from above?"

"He could do it but in one way, and that is in crossing the ford half a mile above, lose his footing and have his horse swept on down by the current to the bar."

"But he was not far enough ahead to do that, oh no!"

"Then too that camp-fire!"

"Ah! I have it! it was not the chief whom I was pursuing that I killed, but one of his men, for, dressed alike, and mounted upon a blood-bay horse, while also seeing him just there, I mistook him for Captain Eagle."

"No, Captain Eagle continued on in his flight, and the man who went over the cliff was one of two of the band who it was said escaped by being absent at the time of our attack, and in seeking refuge in the Indian village his horse lost his footing in crossing at the ford above, and he was swept down the river until he gained a footing on the bar."

"Then he could not go against the stream to leave the place, and until he found that he could get away by riding along the gravel-bar, he remained in that camp."

"That is the way I read the signs, and I believe I am right."

"Well, I am in luck, for no Indian can find me in this retreat, and I will be able to do some good by remaining awhile and reconnoitering on foot, for I will be able to find out if I am right about Eagle the outlaw."

"I hear the war-cries of the red-skins now, and the shots of the soldiers, so they must be coming on up the trail, either one side of the river or the other."

"I will take you back to that little valley, Lucifer, and then find out what is going on."

Back to the retreat the scout rode, and Lucifer was unsaddled and staked out to feed, and he seemed greatly to enjoy the chance to crop the green, juicy grass about him.

Then Buffalo Bill stripped off his lower clothing, and carrying them in his arms, waded along the bar back to the ravine, then up it to the cliff, and thence back to where he had turned off the outlaw chief's trail, to behold the horseman riding down the river-bank, and whose fate had been so sudden.

Dressing himself again, Buffalo Bill went forward cautiously to reconnoiter.

He dared not retrace his way down the trail he had come, until he knew the red-skins were not there.

Going up the river, following the trail of the outlaw, his experienced eye told him that the rapid pace at which the horse had been kept had been slackened, and the scout went with greater caution.

Continuing on, he took in the situation between him and the river, and he was glad to see that there was no way of scaling the lofty cliffs and peaks, to get into a position from whence one could look down into the little valley where he had left Lucifer.

He did not believe that a human foot had ever trod that little retreat, until the outlaw had found it from having been swept down the river and accidentally hit upon it.

Still pressing on Buffalo Bill soon came to a point that gave him a view of the upper ford.

What he saw caused an exclamation to break from his lips, for there sat the outlaw chief upon his horse, and with him was a group of half a dozen Indians.

"I guess I'd better go into hiding in the retreat, or I'll be caught like a rat in a trap, with the red-skins on each side of me."

"Yes, I'll return to the retreat and wait until it is safe to leave there, for there is no chance to escape now mounted or afoot," and so saying he retraced his way to the little valley up the chasm.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY.

RETURNING to the retreat the scout looked over his haversack and the traps he had with him.

Fortunately he had carried his blanket roll and provisions on his saddle, along with his ammunition.

He was never one to go away unprepared for mishaps, and he smiled grimly as he muttered after looking at the contents of his provision bag:

"Well, with economy, I have coffee, bacon and crackers enough to last me three or four days; but I'll see what to-morrow has in store for me.

"I sincerely hope the Indians were not reinforced from the village and Captain Taylor gained a telling victory over them.

"Then he should retreat with all speed, and I hope that he will do so, feeling sure that I can take care of myself.

"Egad, but it looks now as though I needed some one to take care of me.

"Well, I'll not worry, but get a good night's rest, after a cold supper, and see what I can find out in the morning."

Having made his supper off of crackers and water the scout spread his blankets in the wicky-up left by the outlaw and turned in for the night, Lucifer being left to stroll at will, for he would never desert his master.

During the night the horse heard sounds he did not like, and he moved up quickly and rubbed his nose against the form of his master, as though to warn him of danger.

"I am awake, old fellow, and I hear the sounds," and the scout rubbed the nose of the faithful animal.

Then he arose and went down to the edge of the chasm.

Springing upon the back of Lucifer, who had followed him, he rode down to the entrance of the chasm and halted on the bar.

The sounds came from across the river, and were distinctly heard in the stillness of the night.

They were the tramping of hoofs, and the low murmur of voices.

"The Indians are retreating up that shore of the river, so Captain Taylor did drive them all across after all, and I suppose crossed after them, when they stood at bay among the rocks on the river-bank trail.

"But they are on the move now, that is certain, and to-morrow I can retrace my way and join the captain at the lower ford, or follow him if he has retreated.

"Well, I'll get what sleep I can, and the rest will do you good, Lucifer."

So saying the scout returned to his blankets, again turning his horse loose to feed at will.

When he awoke in the morning he dared not build a fire, so his breakfast was more crackers and cold water.

Then he saddled up and started out on the trail.

It was fortunate for him that he did not ride up out of the ravine before reconnoitering.

But his caution and knowledge of Indian nature prevented him from making this mistake, as he was sure that he had been seen to follow the chief in his flight, and not having been discovered returning, the Indians would be certain to follow his trail once they had no longer fear of the soldiers.

So he dismounted from his horse, leaving him in the ravine, while he climbed up the rocky bank and peered over.

"Ah! I thought so."

It was all that he said: but he had seen enough to cause him to quickly remount, turn Lucifer back toward the retreat and lose no time in getting there.

What he saw was a number of Indians standing upon the cliff just where the outlaw's horse had gone backward with him on his back.

They were making gestures and talking as though considerably excited.

"Now they think I urged my horse over there, and that is the end of Buffalo Bill," he said grimly.

"But I still live, as they will find out, if they hit upon my retreat, which, remember, I do not believe they will."

Having discovered that it was impossible to avoid detection, should he venture forth

on horseback or afoot by day, Buffalo Bill determined to remain in hiding all day, and at night start out on a tour of inspection, and on foot.

Did he ride and was discovered, the chances, owing to the nature of the rock-locked trail along the river, were greatly against him should there be red-skins at either ford.

But on foot he could readily hide, leave no trail, and get as near as he pleased to the Indians.

So all day long he slept, and when darkness fell built a small fire and cooked some bacon, toasted some cheese and crackers, and boiled a cup of coffee, so that he had a good supper, and needed it.

Then he staked Lucifer out, not wishing to leave him loose while he was away from the secret camp, and wading along the bar, soon came out to the cliff where the outlaw had lost his life.

He decided to go first to the upper ford, for if he could cross there he would be safe, as once over the river he knew the country well, and could go in search of Captain Taylor and his command or return to the fort.

He went along with the greatest caution, having changed his top-boots for a pair of moccasins, which he always carried among his traps in case of need.

He had brought along his rifle also, and some food, in case he should get cornered for any length of time, as well as his canteen full of water and a blanket.

All were made fast so there would be no shaking, no rattling, should he have to run fast, and fully aware of his peril, he glided along the trail like a ghost.

Suddenly he saw a horseman ahead, and he at once dodged into cover among the rocks, and his rifle was ready for quick use.

As the shadowy form drew nearer, he discovered that there were others behind him.

They were two Indians riding in single file, and they were talking as they rode along.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HEMMED IN.

BUFFALO BILL was sorely tempted to use his repeating-rifle upon the three horsemen, for he knew that he could bring them down by rapid firing and with little danger to himself from them, surprised as they would be.

But the scout was a man who thought twice, in matters of great moment, and well for him was it that he did in this case.

He argued quickly in his mind that if he did kill the two, the shots would be heard at the upper ford, should there be a guard there, and their presence indicated that there was, while naturally the lower ford would also be guarded.

He would then have many red-skins upon his track within the hour, and unable to escape inland he would have to return to his retreat.

Granting that they did not find him there, his presence would be known and the trail between the two fords guarded and patrolled, thus cutting off all escape, unless he chose to swim the river, and that would be a most dangerous undertaking, with no knowledge of a landing on the other shore.

No, he was doubtless supposed to be dead, having gone over the cliff as the red-skins evidently thought, and he would not attract attention to his presence there unless compelled to do so in defense of his life.

It was a clear starlight night, and the horsemen were riding slowly, while as they drew near where Buffalo Bill was crouching among the rocks, to his great amazement he heard them talking in English.

Then he discovered that the one in advance was none other than the young Chief Death Face, and the one following was Captain Eagle of the Red Hand Riders.

It required giant strength of will on the part of Buffalo Bill not to pull trigger when he made this discovery; but he resisted and heard the Indian chief say:

"I think there need be no more fear of Buffalo Bill, for he surely went over that cliff with his horse."

"I agree with you, Chief Death Face; but I regret that it is so, as I wished to end the

career of Buffalo Bill myself, in my own way.

"Had I known that he followed me the day they ambushed us at the ford, I would then have killed him, but—"

They passed out of hearing now and Buffalo Bill heard no more.

But he heard another sound that caused him to crouch still closer in his hiding-place.

Then another horseman came in sight, and another and others until a score of warriors rode along the trail, in Indian file, silent as specters.

"They are the guard of the two chiefs.

"Lucky it is I thought twice before I pulled trigger on the Red Hand and Death Face," muttered the scout.

"So they believe me dead, do they, and Captain Eagle regrets it, as he wished to end my life in his own peculiar way.

"Well, some day we two will meet and may the best man win.

"Now to see if there is a guard at the upper ford, for their presence here almost proves that there is."

So saying, the scout once more resumed his way, and as he neared the ford he saw the glimmer of a light ahead.

"It is a camp-fire," he muttered.

There was no chance for him to scale the cliff on his left, and gain the open country, for the nature of the surroundings prevented; but he crept nearer and nearer until he beheld in a meadow plot off from the ford, the Indian camp.

"There are fifty of them, if there is one.

"They have guarded the three fords, that is certain, but I'll make sure of the two I can reach."

So saying, the scout retraced his steps along the trail.

He walked rapidly, for he had nearly a dozen miles to make to the lower ford, and then return two-thirds of the distance to regain his retreat by daylight. He covered the distance soon after midnight, and creeping forward with the greatest caution, he drew near the ford to discover an Indian sentinel, standing on a rock just where the trail came down to cross the river.

After some difficulty he reached a point where he could get a view of the little meadow behind the ridge and willows, where the cavalry had camped their horses while in ambush.

He saw the reflection of camp-fires against the rocks, and this told him very plainly that the ford was guarded also, perhaps by a larger force than that at the upper crossing.

Could he have escaped from the cliff trail he was in, he would have tried to discover if the third ford was also guarded, though he felt assured that it was.

By slipping up on the sentinel he could end his usefulness very quickly and thus cross the river.

But he did not wish to desert his splendid horse, and felt that if compelled to do so, or starve, he would be then just as able to kill the sentinel and escape.

So he drew back silently into the trail and started upon his return to the retreat.

He walked rapidly and it was not yet dawn when he reached the little camp, and at once he built a fire and cooked a square meal, for he knew he would not dare take another before nightfall again.

"Well, the red-skins have been hit so hard of late that they dread a raid upon their village, and so guard the fords with a force large enough to check an advance and give time for the whole tribe to get ready to resist.

"It is a wise scheme, only they need have no fear of an attack.

"Now for a long rest," and fatigued by his night's walk he threw himself upon his blankets and sunk to sleep just as the eastern skies brightened under the approach of day.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE VENTURE.

WHEN night came on again, Buffalo Bill was again ready to begin his reconnoitering.

He began to fret under the delay he was put to, and was most anxious to escape in some way from the peril he was in, which however was not as much dreaded as was the time he would have to lose.

He well knew that Captain Taylor and the command feared that he had been killed or captured, and he was fearful that his band of scouts might attempt some desperate method of discovering what had been his fate.

Again, after having cooked his supper, he sallied out once more from the retreat.

He was sorry to find that his provisions were running low, and yet, had he found game he dared not fire upon it in that vicinity.

He turned his steps first up toward the ford above, and made a very careful survey of the surroundings.

His hope that the red-skins might have departed was not realized, for there they were, and he boldly ventured near enough, crawling along for a hundred yards to do so, to discover the camp and count the number of braves there.

"Fifty-seven in camp, and one or more on sentinel duty."

"Their ponies all near at hand and all ready for an immediate call if danger appeared," he muttered as he looked over the camp, where the red-skins were grouped around several fires, the encampment being in a little vale near the ford and at the end of the trail coming up from the other ford.

The encampment was so situated that he could not pass around it to the open country, the precipitous walls of rocks preventing even an expert climber from doing so; but, toward the river he could get to the water, and he made up his mind that he would try and find out just where the Indian guard was.

Could he reach the spot where the trail entered the river he could wade across and on foot make his way to the command, or to the fort if Captain Taylor had returned there, and then by a dash of cavalry across one ford and up to the other, and thus back again, the Indians could be dealt another lesson, could be shown that the soldiers were constantly watching them, and Lucifer could be rescued, and this last Buffalo Bill most fondly hoped for.

After a long time and hard and most cautious work, Buffalo Bill managed to get within thirty feet of where the trail entered the river; but there, as though suspecting his object and prepared for it, he saw two Indian sentinels upon a rock between him and the coveted spot.

He could have killed them both with a couple of shots, plunged into the river and escaped across; but, this would have warned the Indians that he was not dead, had been in hiding on their side of the river, and therefore knew just what their force at the fords was.

So he reluctantly returned to the trail, hoping for better luck at the lower ford, as he was now convinced that the Indians intended to remain on guard for some time.

All this had taken up hours of time, and there was nothing to do but return to his retreat and await for the coming night for his reconnoissance of the lower ford, as it would be nearly daybreak by the time he got there.

Then, too, he intended to go better prepared to leave, should he be able to do so.

The time dragged slowly away, but the scout was as patient as an Indian in the delay.

Lucifer was getting a splendid rest and plenty of grass, while his master had come down to short rations, and ate but two meals in the twenty-four hours, one after night-fall, the other before dawn, when he felt there was no danger in his building a fire to cook by, the little he now had to cook though his supply of coffee held out well.

As soon as he had his supper the next night he prepared to leave.

He hung his saddle and bridle on a tree, and with his large bowie-knife had cut a number of poles, which he put across the narrow entrance to the little valley, thus allowing him to erect a barrier that would keep Lucifer in and give him the freedom of the whole place.

"I've got to leave you, old pard, but I hope only for a short while, for it would be like giving up my best girl to lose you."

"You can't eat up all the grass and drink up the water here in a year, if you tried, so

you'll be all right, only don't get lonesome and neigh.

"You understand, don't neigh, or you'll have some red-skin astride of you for the future if you do."

"Good-by, old boy," and the scout affectionately patted the horse, who seemed to understand just what had been said to him and rubbed his head affectionately against his master's shoulder.

Climbing over the barrier, and with his blankets and haversack strapped to his back, his rifle in hand, the scout left the retreat, and coming out into the trail started off in a swinging walk for the lower ford.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

BUFFALO BILL was a good walker, and he drew near the ford two hours after turning into the trail.

But suddenly his keen hearing detected a sound ahead of him, and always on the alert, he quickly looked about him and saw a large rock near behind which he could take refuge.

He darted there quickly and was glad to find several dwarf pines growing in the sand at its base, and that there was a crevice in the rock where leaves had settled and which looked as though it might have been, or was, a bear's lair, or a mountain lion's.

It was a place of refuge however for the scout, and there he hid in the pines while listening, and heard a horseman go by.

Soon after he again heard hoof-strokes, and climbing up to the top of the rock he peered over.

"There is something up, that is certain, for there has been an Indian courier pass each way in the last five minutes."

"I must not venture to leave here yet," muttered the scout.

He therefore settled himself for a wait, and it was well that he did, as soon after another Indian passed along, going to the lower ford.

The trail was not forty feet from where he was in hiding, so he saw them distinctly.

After a long wait he was about to venture forth again, when once more he heard hoofs.

This time half a dozen Indians came in sight.

"I wonder if Captain Taylor is going to venture across and they are preparing for him."

"I sincerely hope not, for it will only be to meet with a heavy loss, if he comes when they are ready for him, as it will be like riding into an ambush."

"I will venture out and get there in time to warn him."

So the scout prepared to leave his hiding-place, and was soon after again upon the trail, and nearing the ford.

As he came within a couple of hundred yards of the ford, he halted and looked cautiously ahead.

Then he sought to search the bank of the river, feeling that he could, if necessary, swim down to the ford, get a footing there and cross.

But as he got within a few yards of the shore, he saw an Indian standing upright there, and with his gaze bent out across the river.

There was a moon in its first quarter, and it revealed the Indian distinctly.

"Ah! they are extending their sentinels, or the one at the ford has been placed here."

"I think, however, that they have put triple guards out, for the seeing of those mounted warriors shows that there is something going on to alarm them."

"Well, that cuts me off here, unless I can get near enough to spring upon him and end it with my knife."

So mused the scout and he began to prepare for the ordeal of a struggle and knife encounter.

But as he did so, the red-skin turned and began to pace to and fro.

That settled it as far as getting near him was concerned, and Buffalo Bill withdrew from his position and gradually worked further on down the river-bank.

He had not gone fifty yards when he saw another sentinel, this one being seated upon a rock.

To get near him was impossible, and flank-

ing his position Buffalo Bill again continued on down toward the ford.

There he beheld two Indians on duty, and they were standing directly in the trail.

"As I supposed, they have increased their guard and extended their line about the ford."

"This means that they are thoroughly on the alert, and I must go slow, or I will yet run upon a hornets' nest."

"Now what is to be done, for if Captain Taylor is meditating coming across, he must be warned at all odds."

"I could make a dash, drop those two fellows in the trail, and perhaps get across, though they would quickly cover the whole river with bullets, and I'd likely catch it."

"If I could get upon one of those upper sentinels, end him and then take to the river, I might get across, and I might not."

"This is a matter to be considered," and the scout decided to retreat to his hiding-place and quietly con over the situation and the best mode of extricating himself from his peril and warning Captain Taylor not to come across the river, as the red-skins were prepared for him. It must be recalled that the scout had no means of knowing that the command had at once retreated after the battle, and that Lieutenant Walter Worth with his force was then searching for him, for days and nights had passed since the pursuit of the outlaw chief had gotten Buffalo Bill into a trap.

Having returned to his hiding-place just one side of the trail, Buffalo Bill had hardly more than reached there when he saw an Indian horseman coming slowly along, the moon revealing him distinctly.

"Now is my chance, for if I can catch him, his rig and horse will get me across in the disguise of an Indian," muttered Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SERGEANT'S VENTURE.

WHEN Sergeant Fallon went off on his bold venture, of deliberately crossing the river in the disguise of an Indian, and in the face of the guard there, he rode down the trail without the slightest hesitation as though he did not dread the consequences.

He entered the stream and slowly allowed his horse to go toward the other shore.

He well knew that if the Indian guard was doing his duty, and Indian guards generally do, seldom being caught napping, that he would be discovered by the time he got half across.

In this discovery he felt lay his greatest danger, for he might be fired on at once.

But this he must risk, and hoping that as the guard could discover, in the light of the new moon, that there was only one person to fear, and would await his reaching the other shore before he began hostilities, he pushed on.

There was the hope too that his war-bonnet might also be recognized, and supposed to be a red-skin he would not be fired upon.

But, whatever the risks he ran he pressed boldly forward and was drawing near the other shore when his quick eyes detected a form spring from a rock and dash rapidly away in the direction of the Indian camp.

"He has run off in alarm, or there are two sentinels there, and he has gone to give warning to the camp," said the sergeant.

But he held on as before, and as he got nearly to the shore he began to sing, in the Indian tongue, a weird battle-song.

Almost instantly a form appeared on the bank, rising from among the rocks, and the sergeant called out:

"Does my brother know the White Wolf, the pale-face brother of the great chief Iron Eyes?"

With a bound the Indian sentinel sprang to the side of the horse of the sergeant, his hands were clasped upon his forehead, and he said earnestly:

"The Lone Fox knows the pale-face brother of the Iron Eyes, the great White Wolf, and welcomes him."

"Let him know that there will be many braves here soon, for the Lone Fox saw the White Wolf coming, and believing he was a pale-face foe, sent for his brothers."

The sergeant had not long to wait, as the Indian band came from the camp at a swing-

ing trot, and the sub-chief in charge of them at once showed respect for the White Wolf, when the Lone Fox said:

"Let my brothers know that this is the great medicine-chief, White Wolf, returned to the tepees of his red people."

Over to the camp the sergeant was led, and dismounting from his horse he sat down by the camp-fire while the Indians gathered about him with almost reverence in their manner toward him, and great interest was shown in his coming among them.

Surely their welcome of him revealed the fact that his name of White Wolf was well known to them, and in his case his being a pale-face was not only forgiven, but he appeared to hold some subtle, mysterious influence over them.

When the pipe had gone the rounds of each brave, the sergeant said:

"I come back among my red brothers to tell them of a great danger."

All were at once silent as statues and most deeply interested, while the sergeant continued:

"Since I last dwelt in the tepees of my red brothers I have been a captive among the pale faces, my own people, for they have kept upon me the eye of a panther."

But dwelling among them, I have been able to do much good for my red brothers, and at the right time they will find that the White Wolf can strike a terrible blow.

"Let my red brothers now guard against a surprise, for across on the other shore in hiding are many braves of the pale-faces, and they may attempt to cross at any time and sweep on up to the villages in the mountains."

"They are many in number, and my red brothers could only, by being warned, defend their homes against them, by guarding the mountain passes, for they have big wheel-guns with them."

"Do my brothers hear?"

It was very evident that the red brothers not only heard, but heeded too, for they were drinking in every word uttered by the sergeant.

"Let my red brothers first send runners to the other fords to warn them of danger, as the pale-face warriors may cross there too, and guard the river near them by half a dozen sentinel braves."

"Let this be done now."

This was done at once by the chief ordering half a dozen of his young men to take position along the river-bank at short distances apart from the trail at the ford to a couple of hundred miles above it, and this was the line of sentinels that Buffalo Bill came upon in his effort to escape.

Others were dispatched to the other fords, a party of mounted warriors starting, while runners came in from the two other bands to state, as was their custom, night and morning that no dangerous signs had been discovered across the shore in their front.

"I will send a runner to the great chief, Iron Eyes, when my brothers here have heard what I have to say," continued the sergeant, after the runners had been dispatched and the extra sentinels placed on duty.

"I would ask the Fighting Bird," he said to the chief in command of the force at the ford, "if the scalp of the great pale-face scout, Pa-e-has-ka, the buffalo and man killer, hangs in the tepee of the Iron Eyes?"

The chief known as Fighting Bird did not reply at once; but after a minute of hesitation said:

"The scalp of Pa-e-has-ka does not hang in the tepee of the Iron Eyes."

CHAPTER XXXII.

TRUE, OR FALSE.

THE response of the Fighting Bird, regarding the taking of Buffalo Bill's scalp, the sergeant showed plainly that he received with surprise, for he said:

"The white chief came with the soldiers to kill my red brothers, and he crossed the river and was not seen again by any of the soldiers."

"Why did my red brothers not get his scalp?"

The Fighting Bird did not, as before, answer promptly.

Then he replied:

"The great white scalp-hunter did cross

the river, and he took the trail of the Red Hand, the friend of the Iron Eyes, and his ally."

"The Red Hand did not see the scalp-taker, and he came back with no story of his killing him."

"My braves then went on the trail of Pa-e-has-ka, and they tracked him to the river-bank, where there was a high cliff, and over it went the horse of the white hunter, for that was visible to all the eyes of my braves, and to the eyes of the young chief Death Face and the Red Hand."

"But did the pale-face scout not go over the cliff with his horse?"

"The Fighting Bird does not know, his young men do not know—the Great Spirit knows."

"You have not been able to trail him?"

"Only to the cliff where the trail shows that his horse went over, and my young men all think that the great scalp-taker has gone to the happy hunting-grounds in the waters of the river."

"The Fighting Bird has trailed for the Pa-e-has-ka?"

"The Fighting Bird and his braves have gone over every track of the trail, as has also the Death Face and Red Hand Chief."

"Let the Fighting Bird know that it is to find the great scout that the pale-face warriors are on the war-path now; to avenge him if slain, to rescue him if he is a prisoner."

"That is why the White Wolf is here to-night, to warn his red brothers."

The Fighting Bird and all seemed to be much pleased with the warning, given them by this mysterious white man who came into their midst, painted and disguised as a red-skin, wearing the war-bonnet of a chief, the sacred robe of the white braves, and bearing the title of an honored chief in their midst, one whom they welcomed with joy and received with almost an air of reverence, through some cause yet unknown to the reader.

After some further conversation with the chief and those about him, the sergeant said:

"The White Wolf would now send a runner to the Iron Eyes, telling him of his coming again among his people."

The Fighting Bird at once selected a young and intelligent warrior, and bade him get his pony and be ready to go to the village up in the mountains with a message from the White Wolf.

"The Red Snake is ready," said the young warrior, as he appeared five minutes after, leading his pony, and halted before the sergeant.

"Let the Red Snake hear then the words of the White Wolf," said the sergeant impressively.

"He will tell the great chief Iron Eyes, that the White Wolf, his pale-face brother, once a medicine-chief, whom he has not seen for years, has been among his own people, the pale-faces."

"He has known that the tomahawk was not yet buried between the Cheyennes and the pale-faces, that the white warriors still dog the trails of the red-skin braves, still kill and pursue them."

"The White Wolf knows, too, that the great scout Pa-e-has-ka is not among his people, that he has disappeared, perhaps has gone beneath the dark river to the happy hunting-grounds; but, the pale-faces believe that he is a prisoner, or that his scalp hangs in the tepee of the Iron Eyes."

"The pale-faces are, therefore, encamped across the river and seek to recapture the great scout or avenge him."

"Let the Red Snake hear well."

"The Red Snake's ears are open to the words of the great Medicine-Chief White Wolf," said the young warrior.

Then the sergeant continued:

"The White Wolf knows that his red brothers are brave, that their village is strong, and he bids the Iron Eyes to have his young men ready to guard it, while his braves at the ford will be watchful and ready to fight back their foes when they come, for White Wolf has warned the Fighting Bird."

"The White Wolf knows that there was a sentinel taken from his post to-day, for he sought to do a brave act, and crossed the river, where the pale faces captured him and his pony."

"Do my red brothers know?"

They all did know, and wondered at the strange disappearance of the Indian sentinel.

They had thought that he had left his post, though he was a trusted warrior, and so had placed two men on duty at the ford.

Now the truth was known, that he had fallen into the hands of the pale-faces.

The sergeant then went on to tell the Red Snake more that he was to say to the Iron Eyes:

"Let the Iron Eyes know that the White Wolf goes back among the pale-faces, when he has visited the grand camps at the other fords, and that he will learn all that he can so as to bring due warning."

"Among the pale-faces the White Wolf is a small man, as a young brave who has never taken a scalp; but when he comes among his own people he is a great medicine-brave."

"He comes to them in the garb of White Wolf the medicine-chief, and he goes back like a spy among the pale-faces."

"Let the Iron Eyes expect to hear from the White Wolf again."

"Has the Red Snake heard?"

"The Red Snake has heard."

"Then let him mount his fleet pony and go to and tell the great chief Iron Eyes all that White Wolf has spoken."

The young Indian made a sign, such as only would be given a great chief, threw himself into his saddle and was off like the wind.

Then the sergeant again turned to Fighting Bird, and leading him apart from the other warriors who were grouped about the camp-fire, he talked long and earnestly with him.

Then the two came to the camp-fire again, the sergeant waved his hand to the assembled warriors and mounting his horse rode slowly away from the camp.

He went alone, crossed the trail and held on the one leading up the river, the same that the outlaw and Buffalo Bill had taken.

And he went alone.

Was he true, or false to his own race?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

THE sergeant rode along the river trail at a slow pace.

He seemed lost in deep thought, and was almost unmindful of whither his horse went, though in reality he would have at once noticed if the animal had turned off the trail toward the river.

After riding for some little distance he half came to a halt, as though he was inclined to turn back.

But, whatever had been his intention it was not carried out, as suddenly over his head circled a coil, a noose settled around his neck and he was dragged backward from his saddle.

By the time he had reached the ground he was in the grasp of a powerful man whose hand was feeling for his throat.

The sergeant was a powerful man himself, and, standing six feet in his stocking feet, splendidly built and with great broad shoulders and muscular arms he had seldom, if ever, met his equal in strength.

But he was taken completely by surprise and hence at a great disadvantage.

His assailant had crept up behind his horse, thrown his lariat, caught his neck in the noose and dragged him backward to the ground before there was time for resistance.

But as the sergeant fell to the ground, and his captor sprung upon him and felt for his throat with iron grip, the moon, just peering over the mountain-top fell full upon the face and form of the man with whom he expected to have a death-struggle, revealing the features distinctly.

"Buffalo Bill is it you?"

The scout it was, as has doubtless been surmised by the reader.

At the call of the sergeant, the deep voice, the words spoken in perfect English and his own name called, Buffalo Bill's hand was stayed as it was near the throat, and he looked fixedly down upon the fallen man.

"No Indian can speak English like that," said the scout.

"No, I am not an Indian, Buffalo Bill."

"Then you are Eagle the outlaw in disguise, and—"

"I am Sergeant Fallon," said the soldier quickly as he saw that Buffalo Bill was preparing for a death struggle again, believing that he had the outlaw chief to deal with.

"Great God! you are Sergeant Fallon?"

"I am, Cody."

"Yes, I recognize your voice now, you are the sergeant."

"And to think that I intended to kill you," and Buffalo Bill grasped the hand of the sergeant, who sprung quickly to his feet and said:

"I recognized you as you bent over me, so called your name."

"Yes, I believed you an Indian, and I lay in wait to catch you."

"I dared not fire a shot here, so used my lariat, and had you not spoken I would have driven my knife to your heart, as soon as I got grip upon your throat to prevent an outcry."

"Thank God you did speak, sergeant, for I tremble now as I recall how close was your call from death."

"I saw your knife, and knew, if I could not grasp your arm my fate was sealed."

"Then I recognized you, but I too thank Heaven that I did not die by your hand, Buffalo Bill, you whom I regard as I would a brother."

"The feeling is reciprocated, sergeant."

"But come, let us seek a hiding-place beyond yonder rock, for any moment an Indian may come along."

"True—hark! one is coming now, and from the upper ford, for I hear the hoof-falls of a single horse."

"It is necessary that I meet him, so you fly to cover at once."

Buffalo Bill obeyed, and with a few panther-like leaps gained the hiding-place he had left when he lassoed the sergeant.

The latter at once leaped into his saddle and turned his horse in the direction he had been going when he had been so rudely brought to book by the scout.

A second after there came a horseman into view, and the sergeant called out to him in the Indian tongue, and he at once came to a halt, while Buffalo Bill muttered:

"More mystery still, for the sergeant speaks Cheyenne as well as any of the tribe."

"I must get at the bottom of all this masquerading."

From his hiding-place Buffalo Bill heard what passed between the sergeant and the Indian horseman.

The latter was a runner from the further ford, and was going to report to Fighting Bird, who was the ranking chief of the bands at the three fords.

He had met comrades on the way who had told him of the coming of the medicine-chief, White Wolf, and the warning of danger he had given them of an attack from the soldiers.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SCOUT LEARNS THE TRUTH.

"WELL, if that does not beat all I ever saw or heard."

So muttered Buffalo Bill, as he saw the respect shown the sergeant by the Indian horseman and heard what passed between them, for he was not thirty feet distant.

When the Indian rode on once more, Buffalo Bill came out, and joining the sergeant, said:

"Now, sergeant, what does this remarkable masquerading of yours mean?"

There was a tone of suspicion in the scout's voice which the soldier could not but observe, but he made no comment, and replied:

"It means that I came here to find you."

"Indeed, and disguised as an Indian?"

"Yes, for I had a disguise with me, one I brought from the fort, intending to use if necessary, yet not until I was convinced that it was."

"And you speak the red-skin lingo like a native?"

"Yes, I speak it like an Indian."

"And your disguise is perfect."

"Oh, yes, I have made up before as a red-skin."

"When did you leave the fort, sergeant?"

"Two nights ago."

"And came here alone to seek me?"

"I came here, across the river alone, to seek you, Mr. Cody, but there are others

over yonder who are waiting for your return."

"Ah! Captain Taylor's command is still there then?"

"Oh, no, Captain Taylor retreated the night following his battle there at the ford, and it was well that he did so, as the Indians sent down a very large force which, with his few men he could not have withstood."

"He left five of your men to try and find you, and they returned to the fort to report that they were unable to do so, and their fear was that you had been killed by the outlaw chief, for they saw him across the river with Death Face and his warriors."

"When they came back without you, and telling about seeing Captain Eagle the outlaw, Lieutenant Worth at once volunteered and asked to go and look you up, taking picked men with him."

"The colonel granted his request on condition that two other lieutenants should follow by each trail, with a troop and a light gun, and camp within aiding distance."

"So Lieutenant Worth was the one to come to my rescue, eh, sergeant?"

"Yes, the gallant young officer was determined to know your fate."

"He brought with him a corporal and eight men of his troop, Surgeon Denmead, six of your scouts, and myself."

"We came to the river and discovered that there was a force of Indians encamped on the other side, and two scouts who had gone on to see reported the other fords well guarded too."

"We went into hiding, and I planned to catch an Indian and learn the truth as to your being captured or not."

"I got my red-skin, spoke to him in his own tongue, and learned that the outlaw had not killed you, nor the Indians captured you, but that you were supposed to have found you could not escape, with the fords guarded, and so had taken the desperate chance of swimming across the river."

"To do this you had forced your horse off of the cliff and then leaped in, but they were sure you could never make the desperate swim across, and while bewailing the loss of your scalp, they shook hands with themselves in congratulations at your death."

"Good! but I still live."

"Yes, to use an apt quotation, 'the king is dead! long live the king'—of the border," answered the sergeant.

The scout did not reply, and the soldier continued:

"As I was determined to know the truth, I let Lieutenant Worth into a secret, which I may now tell you, and it is that I once dwelt among the Indians, and for certain reasons I need not explain, became their medicine-chief, in fact held great power over them."

"I left them with the full consent of their chief, and acting upon my knowledge and past influence I determined to come across the river and look you up."

"I disguised myself, crossed, made myself known, and held a pow-wow with Chief Fighting Bird and his warriors in their camp."

"I discovered that the outlaw captain and the young chief, Death Face, had gone up to the village, which is a little over thirty miles from here."

"They had guarded the fords to prevent a surprise, and it was the outlaw chief who had urged it."

"I told Fighting Bird to at once send runners to the other bands at the fords to say that the soldiers in large force were camped across the river on the three trails, determined to come over and rescue you, and to be on their guard against a surprise."

"I also sent a runner to Iron Eyes, the head chief, telling him I had been with the pale-faces, and had slipped away to come and warn him and my red brothers of danger, but that I would return and let him know just what would be attempted by the soldiers."

"Then I told Fighting Bird I would go on to the upper ford and recross."

"I was determined to see the trail over which you had pursued the outlaw, look at the cliff to which the trail of your horse led and see if you had really ventured such a desperate means of escape."

"That you had I did not believe, but felt that you might have deemed it necessary to

throw your horse over, while you, on foot, could find a hiding-place, or make your way inland and thence around by a distant crossing to thus reach the fort."

"I had started on my trail when you brought it to a very sudden and very nearly fatal end by lassoing me, and lo! the one I sought was revealed to me."

CHAPTER XXXV.

A RUSE TO ESCAPE.

BUFFALO BILL listened to the story told by Sergeant Fallon with deepest interest.

When he had concluded he frankly held out his hand and said in an earnest tone:

"Sergeant Fallon, I ask your humble pardon, I ask you to forgive me, for in my heart awhile ago I had a pang of suspicion against you."

"I heard your words to the Indian, regarding a large force of troops on the other side, and it did look as though you were playing a double game, one of treachery against your own people."

"I am ashamed of the thought, and again I ask you to forgive."

"Willingly, Mr. Cody, for I assure you my actions were against me without full explanation, while I spoke the Indian tongue perfectly, something you were not aware of, as long as you have known me, and I was also rigged out as a red-skin chief."

"I freely forgive you, sir, and shall not give it a second thought after your very manly amends."

"It was to clear myself of suspicion that I made the very long explanation I did at a time when every moment is precious, for you are in danger here, as the power I hold could not save you from death were you taken."

"I am glad of your forgiveness, sergeant, and now we will be still better friends."

"But you speak of my danger here?"

"Yes, it is almost desperate I feel."

"Well, I have been feeling that way ever since I got into the scrape, and only to-night did I desert my splendid horse, hoping to get away afoot, find Captain Taylor and make a dash across and regain him while dealing the Indians another severe blow."

"We could bring up the two supporting commands to Lieutenant Worth and make the dash, but it would cost the life of many a brave soldier."

"I fear so, unless one could surprise them."

"It would be impossible to do that now, I assure you."

"I begin to realize that myself, sergeant."

"But you say you only left your horse to-night?"

"Yes, just after dark."

"Then you did not throw him off the cliff?"

"No indeed."

"I will tell you of that."

And Buffalo Bill told the story how he had seen the outlaw, mistaken him for the chief he was in pursuit of, and then, had trailed him to his lair, and gave his views of how he had doubtless gotten there through his horse losing his footing in crossing and being swept down the current and finding the sand-bar under the high cliff banks.

"Well, that is remarkable."

"But your horse is there now?"

"He is."

"You must not lose that splendid animal, Buffalo Bill."

"I do not wish to."

"Come, we will go that way together, and you can show me where I can meet you to-morrow night."

"To-morrow night, sergeant?" asked Buffalo Bill with surprise.

"Yes, for a plan for your escape with your horse has flashed upon me."

"Out with it in double quick time, please."

"I will go on with you to where you turn off to your retreat."

"Yes."

"You can get up behind me, for my horse will readily carry the double load for a few miles and we can make time."

"I see."

"I will leave you to go to your retreat while I continue on to the upper ford."

"Yes."

"I will have a talk with the Indians, return to the lower ford, as was my intention, cross the river before day breaks, and re-

main all day in camp, reporting to Lieutenant Worth that I have found you."

"I understand."

"Then, after nightfall, I will recross the river."

"It will be dangerous."

"I shall arrange about that with the guards."

"And then?"

"I shall tell them that I know that a scout is to be sent across to see if they are camped near the fort, and to take their braves back some distance."

"I do not exactly catch your idea."

"I will go back with them, and place them in position so that they cannot see the ford."

"Ah!"

"And you, having come out of your hiding-place on horseback, can ride down to the ford and cross."

"Sergeant, you are a brick."

"But are you sure that you run no risk in again placing yourself in their power?"

"None at all."

"I hope you know."

"I do."

"What if Iron Eyes should have come down?"

"I'll be that much more sure of safety."

"Or the outlaw chief?"

"I'll not mind him."

"He may bring influence against you, knowing that you dwell at the fort."

"I do not fear any outside influence that will cause me trouble with old Iron Eyes."

"Well, if you consider yourself safe in coming again, your plot is the one to carry out, for I can slip down to the ford and get across."

"I will hide my horse here, camp near, and when the Indians fall back, will get Lucifer and go to the ford."

"That is just it."

"But I must cover up my trail in some way, or it will be noticed down by the ford."

"I will ride my horse all about there, and up this way and back several times, so that it will cover any suspicion of your tracks, while on the trail from where you enter this one it will hardly be noticed even by those panther-eyed red-skins."

"You are right, sergeant, and your plan goes."

"Now let us be moving."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TAKING THE CHANCES.

THE sergeant leaped into his saddle, and bade Buffalo Bill spring up behind him, which he did.

The horse was a large one, long bodied and strong, so did not wince at the double weight he carried.

At an easy canter he went along the trail and within an hour had reached the spot where Buffalo Bill had to turn off for his retreat.

"I leave you here, sergeant."

"All right, your retreat is near here then?"

"Yes, about half a mile away."

"And I continue straight on to the upper ford?"

"Yes, sergeant."

"You could not lose your way if you tried, for the cliffs rise high on that side all the way and only a bird can scale them anywhere between the two fords—not even a squirrel could escape to the hills that way."

"Well, I'll go on and stay a short while with the Indians in the upper camp and then go back to the other ford and cross in time to get over before dawn."

"Yes, as you are not supposed by the red-skins to let the soldiers see you in your present disguise."

"I will cross in time."

"But are you not short for food?"

"You bet I am, and as hungry as a bear, for I have been on short rations ever since I crossed the river."

"I am glad then to supply you, for I came pretty well supplied, not knowing just what would turn up."

"Take my haversack, as I will not need it now."

"I'll go you," answered Buffalo Bill eagerly, and he unbuckled the haversack from the sergeant's saddle and said:

"You bet I'll feast to night."

After a few more words, as to the time Buffalo Bill was to be at his post, to cross the river, the sergeant grasped his hand

warmly and rode on his way through the now dark trail, for the moon had set, the stars were hidden by fleeting clouds and the high cliffs shadowed the way all along.

Buffalo Bill went at once on the way to his retreat.

He was in a cheery mood over having met the sergeant, and congratulated himself over and over again that he had not used his knife before trying to seize the soldier by the throat.

He was deeply impressed too with the sergeant having come after him, risking his life as he did, for, in spite of his one-time power among the Indians it might have been that he would be received as a foe.

The sergeant had taken big chances, had planned well and had carried out his plot thus far without a single mistake.

Having reached his retreat Buffalo Bill was greeted with a very low whinny of welcome from Lucifer, who trotted up to him as he reached the barrier and sprung over.

"Well, old horse, you shall see the feasting, for I've got grub now to throw to the birds," said Buffalo Bill, as he walked rapidly toward his little camp.

Building a fire he put on his small coffee-pot and as he opened the haversack said:

"Crackers and toasted cheese don't go to night, Lucifer, for I've got some potatoes here, a nice venison steak, chipped beef to broil, a hoe-cake, ham, yes, and some bacon, crackers and cheese."

"I'll just have a supper that will make me see my grandmother's ghost; but so long as I don't see Indians I don't mind nightmares."

"Now for the feast."

And setting to work the scout did enjoy a splendid meal, which, as he looked at his watch and saw that it was considerably after midnight, caused him to say:

"Well, I don't know whether to call this supper or breakfast."

"But I have had a dandy meal, and enough left over for a snack during the day when I don't dare build a fire to cook dinner by."

"Well, cold grub suits me when hot victuals are not handy, or might cause trouble."

Having taken a pull at his pipe, Buffalo Bill then wrapped his blankets about him and was soon sleeping as peacefully as an infant in its mother's care.

He slept on until noon, as there was nothing to get up for, though it was very evident that Lucifer could not understand such laziness in his master, for he would come up and gaze at him curiously now and then, though making no attempt to awaken him.

At last the scout arose, took a plunge in the pool to refresh himself, then ate the remains of his supper, and walked about the valley for exercise.

In the afternoon he took another nap, but at dark was awake, and, building a fire, cooked his supper.

Then he saddled up, took down the barrier and led Lucifer out of the valley.

"It's nip and tuck now, old pard, if we run upon a gang of red-skins, for we are on the home trail, and don't you forget it."

He turned out of the basin, and as he neared the trail, folded his two *serapes* and laid them end to end for Lucifer to walk on.

This he did until he reached the trail where the other tracks were, when he strapped his blankets again to his saddle, listened attentively for awhile and mounting rode on.

He was glad not to meet, or be overtaken by an Indian, for that meant a death-struggle, with no place in which he could hide his horse, until he came to the rock behind which he had hidden when he made his sortie to rope in the sergeant.

Leaving Lucifer there, and making him fast to one of the dwarf pines, he crept on toward the ford.

It was about three hours after sunset, the time when the sergeant had told him it was best to come, and creeping to a good point of look-out he could find no trace of the Indian sentinels where they had stood the night before.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TRUE AS STEEL.

WHEN Buffalo Bill saw that the sentinels were not in position, he did not know what to make of it.

After a thorough search with his glass, taking in the whole shore where the trail led to the water, he felt assured that they were not there.

What it meant he could not understand, for the sergeant had told him he would not move them back until the moon went down behind the mountain range, and he could watch their departure from his place of concealment.

Determined to make no venture with his horse without being fully convinced that no sentinel was there, he crept, one by one, to the places he had reached the night before.

Then he made a last bold effort and reached the trail.

Still anxious to discover the exact truth, for he knew if he rode down to the river and was seen, he would have to fight it out and that might compromise the sergeant, if he was among the Indians, he crept over to have a look at the camp beyond the edge.

All was dark there. The camp was without doubt deserted.

Buffalo Bill could not understand it, but came to the conclusion that the sergeant had come across sooner than he had expected to, and so had taken the Indians away from their posts without waiting for the moon to disappear.

Going back to his horse, and still walking most cautiously, he took up the blanket he had stood him on, to keep him from making any tracks there, and led him to the trail, so that it would appear as though the rider had simply ridden around the rock once.

Mounting, he then rode very slowly down to the trail leading to the river.

His horse seemed to realize the danger and trod lightly.

The trail was reached, and then the river, and Buffalo Bill rode in and began to breast the swiftly flowing waters to the other shore.

He went slowly, and bent low in his saddle almost lying down upon the back of his horse, for he wished to present no greater obstacle than was necessary to any keen eyed look-out who might be watching the ford.

But he received no challenge, heard no sound and reached the other shore in safety.

He could not but utter a sigh of relief, after the dangers and the suspense he had been through for days, and riding to a point back from the river he hitched his horse and returned on foot to the water's edge.

All was dark and greater gloom was settling, as the moon was near its setting behind the mountain range.

He glanced out over the darkly rolling river, yet saw nothing moving saving the waters.

No sound broke the stillness save the murmur of the river as it rolled swiftly onward, the occasional hoot of an owl or yelp of a coyote that had found game of some kind.

Patiently the scout waited for awhile.

Then, as the moon had set, the hours began to lag and drag along and he grew impatient.

He wondered what had become of the sergeant.

Surely he had been the one to take the Indians back from the river.

Or had he done so?

Had they gone back from some reason of their own?

Where was the sergeant?

This question again and again flitted through the scout's mind.

He recalled that the sergeant had left him to go to his retreat, while he went on to the upper ford.

Had harm befallen him there?

Had his power over the Indians, through some mysterious past association been less than the sergeant had supposed?

Then there came upon Buffalo Bill, like a flash of lightning, a suspicion that the sergeant was not playing fair toward the whites, though appearing to do so.

His knowledge of the Indian language, his splendid knowledge of plains craft, his never having spoken of having been a dweller in a red-skin tribe, all forced the thought upon the scout of treachery.

Then came the remembrance of the sergeant's gallant record.

How he had come alone to the fort and enlisted as a private soldier.

How he had made a name for himself by

his splendid courage and skill, and had won promotion rapidly along the non-commissioned line, and, could he have been still further promoted by his immediate officers over him, he would have been given a commission.

Then came the remembrance of the sergeant's daughter, and when Buffalo Bill recalled how the splendid soldier had risked his life to save him, he said aloud:

"The thought of treachery in that man is unworthy of me, an insult to him.

"I feel that he is as true as steel, and will yet prove himself so.

"I am safe, and he may now be a captive to the Indians.

"If so, as he risked his life for me, I will rescue him.

"It is nearly dawn, and when it begins to grow light I will hunt up the camp of Lieutenant Worth, and know what has become of the sergeant—ha! I heard a sound out on the river.

"Yes, it is the swash of water, and—a horseman is coming across.

"I see him now, and it is the sergeant."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RETURN OF THE TRAILER.

WHEN Sergeant Fallon left Buffalo Bill he continued on to the Indian camp at the upper ford.

He received a like welcome there with the one at the other ford, and after a short stay set out upon his return to the point where he had crossed.

Fighting Bird was up and met him there, and warning him against a surprise, he recrossed the ford and rode into the camp a couple of miles back just as day began to break.

He hastily washed off his paint, changed his Indian togs for his uniform, and then, as he saw that Lieutenant Worth was up, he went to his camp a short distance off.

The lieutenant had awakened early and at once asked if the sergeant had returned.

The answer was in the affirmative and turning out of his blanket bed he was dressed when the sergeant came up and joined him.

Sergeant Fallon's first question of the guard as he came to camp, was whether the Indian prisoner was still there.

He heard with pleasure that he was safe, and then met the lieutenant who greeted him warmly and called out:

"Come, Denmead, and hear what the sergeant has to report."

The surgeon joined the two, also greeting the sergeant as he would a friend, and Lieutenant Worth said:

"Now, sergeant, I'll wager two to one you have news for us."

"You would win, sir, for I have."

"Buffalo Bill is a prisoner to the red-skins?"

"He is a prisoner in one sense of the word, sir, and to the red-skins, and yet they are not aware that he is in their power."

"That is a paradox, sergeant."

"He is in hiding in their lines, sir, and cannot get out."

"That is good news, to know that he is alive."

"We must make a dash and rescue him."

"We can save him without bloodshed, sir."

"You saw the Indians there?"

"Yes, sir, I was well received and Fighting Bird a brave young chief is in command of the band across the ford."

"There are three bands, one at each ford, and each under an able chief, and they number from fifty to seventy men in the separate camps."

"We need not mind that number."

"Oh yes, lieutenant, for they are on their guard."

"I placed them on their guard as a matter of fact."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir, I was an Indian when with them, told them I had always been their friend and while with the pale-faces had been held partially in captivity."

"I made them believe that I had slipped away to warn them, asked them about Buffalo Bill, and learned that they believed that he had thrown his horse over the cliff and

then attempted to swim across the river and was drowned.

"I told them then that Colonel Carr had a large force across the river, to come over at each ferry and joining at a certain point on their side of the stream, to march upon their village to the rescue of Buffalo Bill, who it was thought was their captive."

"Ah, sergeant!"

"A little lying in a good cause, sir, does me no harm."

"I only wish we did have the large force."

"No need of it, sir, for Buffalo Bill will escape to-night."

"Heaven grant it!"

"But how do you know, sergeant?"

"I arranged it with him, sir."

"What! you have seen him then?"

"I passed a couple of hours with him last night, sir."

"Glorious!"

"But how did you find him?"

"I didn't, sir; he found me."

"Ah!"

"He lassoed me for an Indian, dragged me from my horse and had I not recognized him and called out, my body would have been a scabbard for his bowie-knife."

"I was pulled back so suddenly that I was surprised, slightly stunned and hardly able to aid myself, for, strong as I know I am, sir, the scout is a giant of strength."

"He did not strike the fatal blow when I called his name, and, finding out who I was, at first doubted me; but soon we understood each other, and he, returning to his retreat, where his horse was in hiding, I went on to the upper ford and then back again to the one where I crossed."

"The Indians do not look for me over to-night, sir, but I am going, and the story I will tell them will draw them back from the ford, to ambush imaginary scouts who are coming over to reconnoiter, and then Buffalo Bill will come out of his hiding-place and cross."

"This is splendid news, sergeant, and you are a rival of Buffalo Bill in your plotting to out-Injun Injun as the men say."

"But now to breakfast, and then get some sleep, after which we will talk it all over again."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

IRON EYES.

SERGEANT FALLON was very much fatigued after his night's work and the strain upon him, for he had had but little sleep for several nights.

Then too the scout's lasso had given his neck a slight wrench, and his fall from his horse had not been a light one.

He was therefore very willing to have his breakfast and then seek his blankets.

When he awoke he was much refreshed by a long sleep, and was ready for the supper which was placed before him.

Then he had a talk with Lieutenant Worth, the result of which was that he told him that he intended to go over the river again soon after night set in, and release the scout.

He explained all about his plan, and requested that the men should be kept in camp, and above all that the prisoner should be most closely guarded.

"Should he escape now, sir, all would be lost, for I would be betrayed by him as being really a soldier and having been his captor."

"In fact, lieutenant, we must take that red-skin back to the fort with us and keep him a prisoner there, as it may happen that again my services will be needed to enter the red-skin lines."

"You are right, sergeant, and I will double iron the red-skin and keep a guard constantly over him," answered the young officer, who then added:

"But I dread to see you again take the risk you do."

"There is no risk, sir, if that red-skin does not escape."

"He shall not do that if I have to execute him as a military necessity," and the lieutenant's looks showed that he meant what he said.

"It would be hard on him, sir, yet what should be done if necessity demanded, what I would do if in command, for military law must be merciless," and the sergeant spoke

like one who had held commands himself in the past and was one to do his duty though the stars fell.

Having rigged out again in his disguise, the lieutenant mounted his horse and rode away, Lieutenant Worth accompanying him as far as the river.

Then the young officer left him, with a firm grasp of the hand and wishes for success, and saw him ride into the dark waters.

He lost his form after he had gotten half way across, but waited until he was sure that he had reached the other side and found the Indian guards.

Hearing no outcry or shot, he muttered:

"I guess he's all right, but his danger is great."

"The man grows upon me more and more and I am sure that he has once held a high position and been in command of men."

"Well, if he gets back in safety with Buffalo Bill, I will write the old senator my uncle, telling him all that he has done, and begging him to use his influence to get him the commission he richly deserves."

So saying, the young officer gazed in silence for awhile over the weird, wild scene, lit up by the moonlight into picturesque beauty, and then turning his horse, rode back to his little camp.

The sergeant meanwhile had crossed the river, been met by the guards, and then rode to the camp beyond the ridge.

To his surprise he found there over a hundred Indian braves, and about a camp-fire built out of sight up in a niche of the cliff, stood several forms upon whom his eyes were at once riveted.

Fighting Bird was there, and near him stood the young chief, Death Face, while seated upon a rock near was a splendid type of a red-skin leader.

He was a man of almost herculean proportions, robed in gorgeous costume, wearing a war-bonnet of barbaric splendor, and with a face bold, rugged, crafty, intelligent and merciless.

His face was furrowed with age, the silver threads streaked his raven locks, but he was still the mighty leader of his people, the grand old fighter, plotter, good general, merciless foe of the pale-faces, Iron Eyes, the head chief of his tribe.

By his side stood a fourth person.

It was one of elegant form, handsome face, dark, sinister, fine though it was.

He was dressed in a black fatigue suit of army style, wore buttons of gold ten-dollar pieces, diamond studs and sleeve-buttons in his *neglige* silk shirt, a massive watch-chain, and a large, brilliant ruby upon the little finger of his left hand, his right being covered with a red glove.

He had a cigar between his lips, stood like one awaiting to be photographed, one booted foot resting upon a rock before him, and his elbow leaning upon his knee as a rest.

His spurs were of gold, his belt of arms showed that they were ornamented with the same precious metal, and altogether he was a most picturesque and striking figure, a man to stand in awe of.

As the sergeant approached, old Iron Eyes arose and greeted him, greeted him as he would one for whom he held both reverence and affection.

"Iron Eyes has come far in the hope of meeting his pale-face brother, the great medicine-chief, White Wolf, for his young warrior Red Snake, said that he might come to this camp by the river."

"The Iron Eyes has with him another great chief of the pale-face race, the Eagle, his brother and ally, and here is my son, the mighty young chief who will some day wear the war-bonnet of old Iron Eyes, the Death Face."

"It gladdens my heart to again see my brother the White Wolf."

"He is welcome, and he has proven my friend."

Such was the welcome, and the introduction of the sergeant to those assembled about the camp-fire in the little ravine among the cliffs.

CHAPTER XL.

THE OUTLAW'S ALLY.

SERGEANT FALLON was perfectly calm under the ordeal he was passing through.

He greeted the old chief most reverently

and kindly, offered his hand to the outlaw, for he wished to feel his grip and remember it, and saluted the young son of Iron Eyes courteously while he did not by any means ignore Fighting Bird.

But he lost no time in at once saying:

"I am here unexpectedly to-night, for I wish to tell the great chief that his foes are not sure that he has warriors camped here, and they intend to send out scouts on foot to cross the river and find out.

"By drawing your braves far back, putting out your camp-fires, and not one being seen, the scouts will come over and find no braves here.

"They will report this to their chiefs, and then when another night the force attempts to cross, the warriors of Iron Eyes will be here to ambush them."

The words of the disguised sergeant were listened to in silence, but with great interest, and old Iron Eyes said:

"The Chief White Wolf speaks with wisdom, and my warriors shall at once draw back to cover."

"Yes, it will be the very thing to do, for if the soldiers believe that you have withdrawn your guards from the fords, they will cross, hoping to surprise you, and dash upon an ambush and be beaten back right here, as they should be."

"I would send couriers to the other bands also, chief," the outlaw joined in, "to have them also fall back for the night.

"Would you not, White Wolf?"

"It would be just what I should do, sir," answered the sergeant.

Orders were at once given to put out the camp-fires, get the ponies and camp outfit, and retreat over the range half a mile back.

The sergeant went along and rode with Iron Eyes, the two talking together like old friends.

When they had come to a halt the outlaw stepped up to the sergeant and asked:

"What force is on the other side, sir?"

"There are three commands, sir, two of considerable strength, the other not so large."

"Have they any guns?"

"The two larger commands have artillery, sir."

"And infantry?"

"Mounted infantry with cavalry and the guns."

"Then Carr is in earnest to rescue his pet scout, Buffalo Bill?" said the outlaw.

"Yes, sir, he seems determined to rescue him or avenge him."

"He will never rescue him, for he is at the bottom of the river, as for once Buffalo Bill lost his nerve, when he found himself on a trail there was no escape from, and attempted the desperate undertaking of swimming the river."

"He has never reported in camp."

"He never will; but I would give ten thousand dollars for his scalp."

"I wish I had known that before," said the sergeant with a laugh.

"It is too late now; but there are two there I will give a reward to get their scalps."

"Who are they, sir?"

"One is Lieutenant Worth, who has been a persistent foe of my band of Red Riders, the other is Sergeant Fallon."

"I know them both, sir."

"They have both been the strong allies of Buffalo Bill to wipe me out, and here I am a fugitive to-day with no men left, and must begin life anew to gain both gold and revenge.

"But I am not dead yet, and I will have both."

"You are right, Captain Eagle," said the sergeant.

"May I ask your name, my friend?"

"My name is Louis, sir."

"What position do you hold under Colonel Carr?"

"I am in the ordnance department, but hold only an inferior position."

"You have once dwelt among the Indians?"

"Yes, as a fugitive from my own people, I became a renegade and was a medicine-chief.

"When I could do so I returned to my people, unknown however, to work like you, for gold and revenge.

"Some day I will have both."

"See here, you are just the man that can aid me, and in doing so help yourself."

"I am willing, if there is any money in it."

"There is, and big money, too, for you."

"I am your man, Captain Eagle," was the earnest reply.

The outlaw was evidently greatly excited, through some thought that had crossed his mind.

He paced to and fro for a minute, his hands clasped behind his back, his whole bearing that of one who was moved by strong emotion.

Again turning to the sergeant he said, and in a perfectly calm tone:

"You dwell at Fort Advance, of course?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know Sergeant Fallon well?"

"He is my most intimate friend, and I occupy his quarters."

"Good! have you any love for him?"

"I have for him, sir, the deepest hatred, as he has been my worst enemy, and at times I have been tempted to take his life."

"Then you are the very man I want for an ally—what do you say?"

"I will serve you, sir, as I can serve myself in doing so."

CHAPTER XL.

PLOTTING WITH A FOE.

THE outlaw leader seemed pleased with the idea of his ally's hatred for Sergeant Fallon, and said, when he was told that he would serve him:

"Well, you will have to go slow, and there is much to be done."

"I am ready."

"I'll tell you just what my plan is, and see what you think of it."

"I'll frankly tell you what I think."

"I believe you, for the chief speaks of you in the highest terms, in fact loves you as a brother, and the only thing I had against you was that, after being a renegade, you went back to your people."

"It was, as I said before, for a purpose."

"Ah, yes; but now to my plot with you."

"I am all attention."

"You of course know the sergeant's daughter?"

"I do."

"She is an heiress, you know?"

"I have heard so, in fact I know that it is the case from the sergeant."

"I had her a captive, with others, but that Buffalo Bill guided Lieutenant Worth, Sergeant Fallon and others to my retreat and rescued the prisoners, destroying my band and making me fly as a fugitive for shelter with my good friend Iron Eyes."

"I see."

"Now I wish to get possession of Lucille Fallon the sergeant's daughter."

"Ah!"

"And that is what I wish you to aid me in."

"I can do it if any man can."

"My plan is for you to notify me, by a letter left at a certain spot on the Overland Trail which I will describe to you, when I can get possession of her."

"She can be called to Pioneer through an excuse of some kind, to meet a lawyer there who will not come further on, and I will hold up the coach and capture her."

"But your men are all dead or prisoners."

"Yes, but I am organizing another band out of new material, and who will serve my purpose even better than the others did."

"You wish to capture the girl and get a big ransom for her?"

"That is just it, and Sergeant Fallon with her."

"I understand."

"You wish both."

"I do, the one for revenge, the other for gold."

"Well, I believe I can arrange it."

"You must understand the whole situation, the name of the girl's lawyer in New York, something of the facts of the case of her inheritance, and just what to do."

"Now, when she was my captive I looked over her papers, and I have the name and address of the lawyer, in fact one of his letters, and I can forge his writing perfectly."

"I will write the letter to her, mail it from Pioneer City, telling her that, writing as the lawyer, I cannot come any further as I am

suffering with an attack of rheumatism, and that she and her father must come to me, the lawyer, mind you, by return coach.

"I will then lie in wait on the trail and capture them."

"A good idea."

"There is another thing."

"You must see to it that the girl's jewels and money are taken along, though she must not know this."

"Smuggle them on the coach in some way, for you can get possession of them, intimate as you are at the sergeant's home, and I will share with you."

"Thank you."

"I know where the money and jewels are kept and I can get them, and will see that they go through with the sergeant and his daughter, never fear."

"One thing more."

"Yes."

"My wife is at the fort?"

"Yes, sir, she returned with the rescue party, very ill."

"How is she now?"

"Well again."

"Use your influence for the sergeant and his daughter to have her accompany them to Pioneer City."

"I guess it can be done."

"And she has money and jewels too, so try and put them aboard the coach."

"I'll see to it."

"But be careful not to compromise yourself."

"I will see to that also."

"Is Jack Jessop driving now?"

"Oh, yes."

"It will be his last trip, for I'll bury him on Monument Hill."

"He is too plucky a man to be in the Overland coach-driving business, and so he goes under."

"It is just as well, I guess, though I rather like Jack."

"Well, now we'll go over the whole matter again, and just as soon as you return to the fort, notify me by letter what you think can be done, or if you can think of any better plan."

"The place to leave the letter is under the end of the third board of the Canyon River bridge, where it projects over the land, as I suppose it must, though I have not seen the new structure."

"At any rate, look well for a spot there, and I'll find it, for I'll take to the trail soon with my new band."

"I'll prepare the way for you, Captain Eagle, never fear," was the answer of the sergeant, and then the two went all over the same ground again, the outlaw asking many questions about the fort and its people, and coming to what he considered was a thorough understanding with the man whom he little dreamed to be his foe.

This conversation being ended, the sergeant held a pow-wow with his old friend, Iron Eyes, the outlaw, Death Face and Fighting Bird being present.

It being then after midnight a couple of hours, Sergeant Fallon suggested that he would make a visit to the ford to see if the enemy had sent their scouts across, and send back word by a couple of warriors who would accompany him, as he would then be compelled to go on back to the command where he was expected to serve as the Indians' spy.

Two young braves were therefore called to accompany him, and Iron Eyes said that he had increased the force of guards at each ford by fifty men, while several hundred more braves under Death Face would camp at the first mountain pass on the trail where they could give battle to the soldiers, and be reinforced readily from the village.

Iron Eyes himself would return to his village, and Captain Eagle was to remain at the ford, being at liberty to go where he pleased.

Assured by these facts, and accompanied by the two braves, the sergeant set out upon his return.

He left the braves on the ridge, advanced alone to the river, and discovering, by the sign agreed upon between them, that Buffalo Bill had been there, he went back and told the warriors to return and report to Iron Eyes that a scout from the soldiers had been across the river, so that they could come back into their camp again.

Then he rode into the river to cross.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE RETURN TO CAMP.

THE sergeant was greeted by Buffalo Bill as he rode out of the water, the two friends clasping hands warmly.

"I am glad indeed to see you again, sergeant, for I was becoming very nervous about you."

"I was delayed, as I did not dare appear anxious to get back."

"I found Iron Eyes, Death Face, and the outlaw in camp when I went over, and a number of warriors as well, so I decided to get them well out of the way at once, and would not delay for the time agreed upon."

"I found, upon my return to the ford, the stick on the rock, and that told me you had been there and crossed."

"I gave the chief a great ghost story about the soldiers, and I had an hour's chat with the outlaw."

"Indeed."

"It must have been edifying."

"It was, I assure you."

"What was it all about, sergeant?"

"Oh, I agreed to become his ally."

"His ally?"

"Exactly."

"For what?"

"To kidnap Sergeant Fallon and his daughter, or get them into his power."

"You don't mean it?"

"I do, and more, he thinks you are dead, and was sorry, for he said he would give ten thousand dollars for your scalp."

"It is worth more than that to me."

"I told him I was sorry I had not known of it, for I'd like to have earned the money."

"And so you are to kidnap yourself and your daughter for the outlaw?"

"Yes, and one other."

"The colonel?"

"No, his wife, that is the outlaw's wife."

"Well, he is a good one and no mistake."

"He beats them all."

"But he has a plan that I will tell you as we ride for camp, and we'll endeavor to help him carry it out, for when he holds up the coach he will not only find Sergeant Fallon in it, but Buffalo Bill, Lieutenant Worth and a few good scouts and soldiers with others following on behind and a few more to head off the outlaws, so that we will catch the whole outfit."

"The very thing to be done, sergeant; but who has the outlaw chief for a band?"

"That is the question, Cody."

"Doubtless red-skins?"

"I had that idea at first, but he spoke of going to Pioneer City where he had friends, and I believe he will get men there, and more than he had before, from what he gave out in the way of hints."

"Then to be sure we will have to be well provided with men, say one on the box with Jack Jessop, who is also to be counted when it's a scrimmage, and a dozen can pack away in the coach."

"Then a few scouts and soldiers on the trail behind the coach, some more of my men ahead and we'll rope in the entire outfit as you suggest."

"We'll do it, and arrange with the lieutenant, but keep it as secret as the grave."

"When the letter comes we will then be ready to go out on the first coach, and the man who rides on the box with Jack Jessop can wear a hat and clothes to appear to be my daughter, for she rode all the way through on the box, you know; but here we are at camp."

Day had dawned, and the camp was astir, but the men were not building any fires, but were preparing to eat a cold breakfast.

But having washed off his paint and changed his clothes, where he had done so before and out of reach of the eyes of the Indian prisoner, the sergeant led Buffalo Bill directly to the quarters of the lieutenant.

The men waved their hats, but dared not cheer, and Lieutenant Worth and Surgeon Denmead sprung forward and cordially greeted the scout, at the same time congratulating the sergeant upon the gallant rescue he had made.

"We began to fear you were dead, Bill; but I'll not have such a thought of you again until I see you buried, for you certainly bear a charmed life."

"But tell us of your adventures."

"Let me first say, Lieutenant Worth, that

the men can build camp-fires and cook breakfast, sir, if it is your wish, for the Indians know you are here, as I told you, and it would be well to have a dozen fires so the red-skins would believe there were a number of men."

"I'll give the order at once, sergeant."

"Pardon me, lieutenant, for I do not wish to presume; but would it not be well to send a few men to the other fords, sir, to also build fires there, for the red-skins think all of the three are guarded."

"The men shall go at once, a scout and two soldiers to each."

"Any thing more, sergeant, you or Bill, to suggest, for I assure you that you do not presume?"

"I'm a back number just now, lieutenant, having been in retirement so long, but the sergeant spoke on the way here of my suggesting to you that it would be well to bring up the other two commands to the fords, and remain a few days, tossing a shell now and then across the river to keep the Indians scared, and to let them know we will cross into their country if they give us any cause."

"I'll act upon that suggestion without delay, for it is an excellent one," and Lieutenant Worth detailed a scout and two soldiers to go to each of the other fords, pick out a good camping-place and build a dozen good fires, that the smoke might be seen by the Indians.

Two more of the scouts were also dispatched at full speed to the two reserve camps, to order up the commands, one to each of the other fords.

This being done, the lieutenant and surgeon sat down to hear the stories the scout and sergeant had to tell.

CHAPTER XLIII.

BURSTING SHELLS.

BEFORE nightfall the two reserve commands had reached the fords they had been guided to by the scout sent to each of them.

They found them good camping-places, water, wood and grass in plenty, and which could be readily defended if need be.

There were a dozen fires built by those sent on ahead, and the officers in command were delighted to learn of the rescue of Buffalo Bill, and that there was a chance for a brush with the Indians, for, being ordered to the front, they believed there would be.

It was just before sunset that Lieutenant Worth, Buffalo Bill and Sergeant Fallon rode into the camp at the upper ford, and were welcomed by the officers and men.

"Percy, how is your gun placed?" asked Lieutenant Worth.

"It commands the ford and the other shore, though it is not in position to be seen."

"All right, run it into position as soon as Buffalo Bill shows you, just to toss a shell or two, for he has been devoting the past few days to studying the Indian camps at two of the fords," said the lieutenant with a smile, while the scout remarked:

"Say nights rather, lieutenant, for I've been resting by daylight."

Going to a point which commanded a view of the other shore, Buffalo Bill ran his glass over it and said:

"Sergeant, when I reconnoitered, the camp was in those willows."

"Yes, that is it, and the ponies are corralled over beyond them."

"I'll see if I can put a shell there," and the officer in charge of the guns sighted one himself, a sergeant training the other.

"Fire!"

The six and twelve pounder flashed together, and shells went shrieking across the river.

One burst directly in the willows, the other beyond, where the sergeant had said the horses were.

There was a neighing of horses, several ponies dashed into view, and it was certain that the shells had been a startling surprise to the red-skins in camp.

"Percy, I wish one of your guns sent at once down to my camp, and with full speed, for I shall drop a shell or two into the camp across the river from me, and then push on down to Marlowe's camp and have him give the reds a surprise, though we do not know just where they are located at the lower ford, and must guess at it."

"Toss a few more shells over there and then limber up and get the gun away, whichever one you care to send."

Half a dozen more shells were sent flying into the Indian camp, and then the gun was sent down to the camp of Lieutenant Worth, who, after supper with his officer comrades there, rode away with Buffalo Bill, the sergeant and the three men sent there in the morning to build fires, back to his camp.

He found it no easy task to overtake the gun, the crew being anxious to reach their position and throw in a few shells before word could be sent down from the upper ford, though the firing would naturally be heard there, the sound traveling by the river.

The gun was dragged to the ridge, and the sergeant pointed out just where the camp and corral of ponies were.

"Aim it yourself, sergeant," ordered Lieutenant Worth.

The sergeant did so, and the shell was seen to burst right behind the ledge.

Wild yells followed, and with the firing of a second shell into the corral of ponies, it also struck home, for horses neighed wildly in fright.

"Give them a few more shells, sergeant, and then the gun can go to camp while we hold on down to the lower ford."

This was done, the gun retreated to camp, and Lieutenant Worth, Buffalo Bill and Sergeant Fallon followed on down the river trail to the lower ford.

It was some fifteen miles distant, and over a rough trail; but, they reached the camp soon after midnight and found the officer in command and his men all under arms and ready for the fray, for they had heard the firing from the middle ford and expected to be called upon to move at any time.

"It is no alarm, Benedict, at least to us, though it is for the Indians."

"I took a fancy to let the red-skins know we were across here in very heavy force, as Sergeant Fallon had so reported to them, and got Percy to open on them, and borrowing one of his guns I did the same, and now I wish you to stir them up."

"With great pleasure, Lieutenant Worth," answered Lieutenant Benedict who was in command.

"Have you any idea of just where their camp and corral is?"

"I reconnoitered with my glass just before sunset and think I found their camp, and behind it is a meadow where I saw a pony astray."

"We'll chance it," and the guns were placed in position, the spots pointed out to the gunners, and first one then another roar came, the shells went shrieking on their errands and bursting just where it was intended they should.

Again startled yells answered, and then half a dozen more shells went crashing into the timber on the other side.

"Give them a couple of shots just at dawn, Benedict, and the other camps will do the same to show them that we have guns at each ford."

"We will camp at the fords for a couple of days yet, and then return by easy marches to the fort, for I do not believe a red-skin will venture across the river for a long while to come. Eh, Cody?"

"I do not think so either, sir, unless Eagle, the outlaw, puts them up to some act of devilry," was the scout's answer, and, after a snack the lieutenant and his two companions returned to their own camp.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A SUSPICIOUS MOVE.

THE stay of the commands at the fords was continued for three days longer, and every morning and evening what the troops called the "sunrise and sunset guns," were fired across the river at the Indian camps, the guns being loaded with shell.

Since the first night of the firing not an Indian had been seen or heard.

They were either gone or in hiding further off.

Sergeant Fallon volunteered to go across and discover, making the site of the three fords in the night along the trail upon the other side, but Lieutenant Worth said that he did not care to have him take any more chances.

Then the sergeant said it would be well for him to cross just where he had before, and let the Indians feel that he was still trying to serve them, also giving them another ghost story about the troops intending to remain for some time.

Thus urged the lieutenant yielded, and rigging out in his Indian costume once more Sergeant Fallon rode slowly away from the fort after supper one night.

Lieutenant Worth and Buffalo Bill accompanied him to the river, and then waited.

It was bright moonlight, and the other shore could be plainly seen, the officer and the scout watching the sergeant all the way across and until he disappeared in the shadows of the other side.

They waited two hours before they saw him come again into sight.

He rode into the river, came across and joined them back in the shadows on the ridge.

"Have they gone, sergeant?" asked the officer.

"No, sir, they are there, only camped well back, and with half a dozen braves on guard at a time, while their force now numbers a couple of hundred men at each ford."

"Give me the location of their camp and we will toss a shell over there in the morning."

"Pardon me, lieutenant," said Buffalo Bill, "but that would compromise the sergeant, as they would understand that through him only the location could have been found out."

"You are right, Cody, and it would not do."

"You could hardly reach there as it is, sir, for they are well protected; but, as Mr. Cody says, it might bring suspicion upon me, and I was received in a most friendly manner."

"Was Iron Eyes there?"

"No, sir, he is back at his village, and Death Face commands five hundred warriors at the pass where they would hope to check your advance, with the braves who would retreat from the fords, and others who would come from the camp."

"They have planned well indeed, sir, and are in dread of your advance, for they think you have two-thirds of the force from the fort."

"Fighting Bird is in command at the ford here, and he is a plucky, able chief."

"The shots did some damage at each ford, for half a dozen warriors were killed opposite to us, two at the upper camp and one at the lower, while a score were wounded, as the shells dropped right into their midst."

"Then too they lost a number of ponies by the shelling."

"We did do some service then at random."

"Yes, sir, and they will be most cautious about recrossing the river for some time to come."

"I hope they will not allow us to rust in camp."

"No danger of that, lieutenant, for they are Indians and they will break out in a new spot when they think you have forced them to lie quiet," remarked Buffalo Bill.

"There is one thing I did not like, lieutenant."

"What is that, sergeant?"

"The outlaw chief has left the camps."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did he leave?"

"The day after my visit, sir."

"Where did he go?"

"I was told by Fighting Bird that the outlaw seemed sorry to have trusted me after I left, and told Iron Eyes so."

"Iron Eyes and Death Face laughed at him, and he said that he had made a mistake but would rectify it and soon after he left the camp."

"I asked where he had gone, but Fighting Bird said that he did not know; but he thought to the village of the pale-faces, meaning Pioneer City."

"But he would not dare to cross the fords."

"It seems, sir, that he knows of another ford up the river to which no trail leads, but where there is really a good crossing, and he went there."

"He wished to lead a band of warriors

around that way to attack the upper camp, but the Indians were too afraid of the big guns to listen to it."

"It's well for us they were; but would he dare go to Pioneer City where he must be known?"

"Yes, lieutenant, for you know he always wore a mask as an outlaw and no one saw his face."

"His face is not known in Pioneer City, and I never saw it that I know of," the scout remarked.

"But is he masked now?"

"No, sir."

"Then you saw his face?"

"I did, sir, and would know it again if I met his ghost in Hades," was the sergeant's emphatic response, for a moment did he break out from his accustomed quiet mien.

"Describe him, sergeant, please."

"A man six feet in height, sir, built like an Adonis, herculean in strength, and with a dark, intellectual face, cynical, stern and very handsome, but for its look of cruelty."

"He has a long dark mustache, and his hair hangs upon his shoulders."

"He is a very striking looking man, sir, and worthy of a better calling to judge by his appearance."

"Well, I hope to have a close look at him some day; but what do you think he went to Pioneer City for?"

"I told you, sir, of his intended letter to my daughter, and as it seems he grew suspicious of me, my idea is that he has gone there to plot to get her into his power at once."

"By the Lord Harry, but you may be right, sergeant."

"We will break camp at daylight and push for the fort."

"Come, I'll send couriers to the other camps to move also," and the three returned at a gallop to the camp.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE RESCUED AND RESCUER'S RETURN.

WHEN the three forces got under way they marched at a speed according to the distance they had to travel, that all might make the same camp the first night on the way.

The command from the lower ford made twenty miles, and camping early they were joined in the afternoon by the party under Lieutenant Worth.

At dark the third command under Lieutenant Percy came in, and Walter Worth surveyed his little army with considerable pride at being the superior officer.

When they pulled out from camp early the next morning, seeing that the news that the outlaw had gone to Pioneer City made Sergeant Fallon anxious, he said him:

"Sergeant, you and Buffalo Bill can push on ahead to the fort, for the command cannot get in to-night without crowding the horses very hard and riding late, and there is no necessity for either."

The face of the sergeant brightened at the order of the lieutenant, and he said:

"Thank you, sir; I shall be most happy to go on ahead."

"And Cody too, for rescuer and rescued must go in together."

"Say to Colonel Carr I will arrive with the command to-morrow, not caring to push the cattle."

"Yes, sir," and the sergeant at once reported to Buffalo Bill what the lieutenant had said, and the two started off at a pace more than double that at which the troops were traveling, retarded as they were by the guns, a couple of ambulances and some pack-mules.

The sun was yet above the horizon when the sentinel on the watch-tower reported the coming of two horsemen by the trail leading to the Indian country.

The glass of the officer of the day soon recognized the sergeant and Buffalo Bill, and when the news spread like wildfire through the fort, cheer after cheer was given for the gallant scout, whom all had begun to look upon as being dead.

The colonel heard the cheering, and the coming of the scout and Sergeant Fallon was soon reported to him and he called out:

"Wife, Cody is not dead, but is nearing the fort with Sergeant Fallon."

"That splendid young fellow, Worth, rescued him as he said he would."

"This is glorious news," said Mrs. Carr, coming from an inner room, and just then the two horsemen rode into the fort amid the wildest cheering.

They came at once to headquarters, Buffalo Bill courteously doffing his broad sombrero at the welcome, the sergeant taking all as for the scout, and only saluting when he passed an officer on the way.

Arriving at headquarters, the scout and sergeant entered, and the colonel stepped forward and greeted them with a grasp of the hand and the words:

"Well, sergeant, you found Cody, I am happy to see."

"Yes, sir, I was so fortunate, sir, or rather, he found me, Colonel Carr, as you will hear, sir, when I make my report to you, which Lieutenant Worth asked me to do."

"And where is the lieutenant?"

"Coming on with the command, sir, and will arrive to-morrow night, for he called on the other forces to join him at the river and all are together."

"Any battle, sergeant?"

"None, sir, only a few shots from the heavy guns at the Indians' guard camps across the river, and which killed about half a score and wounded forty or fifty more, with some ponies slain also, sir."

"Well, Cody, how was it you got off the trail?"

"I couldn't get off the trail, sir, rather, for I was caught under the cliffs between the center and upper fords, and I had no means of escape, but found a hiding-place, fortunately, sir."

"And how did you escape?"

"I started from my retreat afoot, sir, saw the sergeant in Indian regimentals, mistook him for a red-skin chief, and lassoed him."

"I must hear the whole story from both of you!"

The stories were told, as known to the reader, the sergeant telling his first, and both were listened to with the greatest attention by the colonel who then said:

"Sergeant, your daring and gallant rescue of Chief of Scouts Cody, at the risk of your own life, shall be reported with a strong recommendation added to others already sent to Washington, for your promotion to a lieutenantancy."

"I thank you, sir."

"It will be a well-won appointment, sergeant but, as you request it, it will be best to say as little as possible about your going into the Indian lines, as it might reach the ears of the outlaw, who you say left the camps after your first visit, presumably going to Pioneer City?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then he will be up to more deviltry, I fear, but, sergeant, your daughter is not here, you know, or had you heard of her departure?"

"My daughter not here, sir?" and Sergeant Fallon turned to the hue of death.

"Don't be alarmed, man, for she only went by Jack Jessop's coach this morning to Pioneer City to see her lawyer, who wrote to her that he was laid up there with rheumatism, and wished both of you to come on there."

"As she did not know when you would return, she went alone, declining to take Mrs. Lamar with her, not believing she was able to stand the trip; but what ails you, sergeant?"

"My God, Colonel Carr, that letter was a trick of the outlaw chief to get my child into his clutches again," gasped the sergeant.

CHAPTER XLVI.

TO SHOW NO MERCY.

THE words of the sergeant fairly startled the colonel, and he looked anxiously toward the scout and said:

"Cody, the sergeant is too deeply moved to speak."

"Tell me yourself what this means?"

"It means, colonel," answered Buffalo Bill, "that while in the Indian lines Sergeant Fallon had a long talk with Eagle the outlaw leader, and became his ally in an intended capture of himself, the sergeant, and Miss Fallon."

"A compact was entered into between

them, as I understood it from Sergeant Fallon, that he should inveigle himself and Miss Fallon, along with Mrs. Lamar, to take the coach to Pioneer City, and he would hold it up and capture them.

"The outlaw had seen Miss Fallon's papers and letters, when she was his captive, copied the address of her lawyer and secreted a letter of his so as to forge his writing and signature.

"A letter to her was to be written from Pioneer City, pretending to come from the lawyer and saying, as he was laid up and unable to come to the fort, she must come to him on a most important legal matter that he would explain."

"I see it all, and she has fallen into the trap, for it was to Pioneer City that the outlaw went to carry out his infernal plot.

"Sergeant, you have my deepest sympathy, and we will do all we can to rescue your daughter I assure you."

"I feel that, sir; but she is now in that man's power, and—"

"Colonel Carr, may I offer a suggestion?" said Buffalo Bill, suddenly.

"Out with it, Cody."

"The outlaw crossed the river at a point beyond the upper ford, the Indians told the sergeant, at a secret ford known to him alone.

"Now I believe he carried Indians along with him, so a trail will be left, and if he has captured Miss Lucille he will most surely take her to the village of old Iron Eyes, for nowhere else could he carry her in safety."

"Yes, Cody."

"If he held up the coach to-day it was on the other side of Canyon River Bridge, and it is as far for him to ride from there to his secret crossing of the river, as it is for us to go down from here, and by hard riding we could get there first, so, sir, begging your pardon, if we could start at once, push through and meet Lieutenant Worth, we could—"

"Cody, you have hit the nail on the head, and you and the sergeant shall start within half an hour on your ride.

"You, sergeant, can ride my best charger, Spur, for he needs exercise, and Lieutenant Worth will go back with you and take what men he deems necessary, leaving the command to Lieutenant Percy to bring on.

"Say to Lieutenant Worth, sergeant, that such is my wish.

"Let him pick his horses, and you should reach him in time to-night to get a short rest there for yours, and be away all together at dawn."

"We will, sir, and I thank you deeply for your great kindness.

"We will start within half an hour, sir, but I dislike to force Scout Cody and others on such a hard ride," said Sergeant Fallon earnestly.

"Oh, don't mind me, sergeant, for I've had more rest of late than I wanted," said Buffalo Bill dryly.

"Well, now be off, and remember, sergeant, you are to ride my horse, Spur."

"Thank you, sir," and with wishes for their success the colonel saw them depart hastily for their respective quarters.

The long ride they had had was forgotten by both men, for what did they care for fatigue when it was to save Lucille from the power of the hated outlaw chief.

Buffalo Bill hastened to his quarters to change his clothing, and order two of his best horses brought out, for the scout was noted for the splendid animals he always had ready for use.

One of them he intended to ride, the other as a pack-animal, and he ordered a good supply of provisions put in the pack-saddle, and within an hour after leaving the colonel's quarters he was ready for the trail.

He had had his supper, and just at dark rode up to the sergeant's quarters.

The latter had gone straight to his home and been welcomed by Mrs. Lamar, who was almost herself again in looks.

In a few words he told her the truth, for he deemed it better that she should hear it from him, than from others.

She listened with an expression of commingled sorrow and suffering upon her beautiful face, and said:

"Oh! if I could only go with you."

"But you cannot."

"You will bring her back to me, for I love her so dearly, the true, noble girl."

"We will bring her back," was the stern reply.

"And Sergeant Fallon?"

"Yes."

"Bring him back, too."

"Don't mind me, as I know Buffalo Bill has done, but bring him back and let him suffer the penalty of his awful crimes, for he deserves death, indeed he does."

She then hastened to get the sergeant's things ready for his hard trip, made up a little bundle of clothes for Lucille, and had all in readiness when Buffalo Bill rode up and called out:

"Time, sergeant, time!"

The colonel's magnificent roan, Spur, was there, with the sergeant's saddle and bridle on, and there was a place in the pack-saddle for what the soldier wished to carry along.

These were stowed away and Mrs. Lamar said earnestly:

"Mr. Cody, I have asked the sergeant to show no mercy on my account, and I say the same to you—bring Loyd Lamar the outlaw back with you."

CHAPTER XLVII.

A MAD RIDE.

THE two friends rode out of the fort side by side, the pack-horse traveling behind.

The traps of the horsemen had been so divided up, that the saddle-horses had only the weight of the riders, the pack-animal carrying the balance.

They were gazed upon as they rode away back on the trail they had come, the soldiers wondering at their going so soon after their return.

As they left the gate the scout urged his horse into a slow canter, the sergeant's and the pack-horse settling down to the same steady pace.

Thus they went on their way through the darkness, casting mile after mile behind them.

"We will reach the camp by midnight, sergeant, and that will give our horses and ourselves a good rest until dawn, and allow Lieutenant Worth ample time to select his men."

"What number do you think he will take, Mr. Cody?"

"I should say six of my men, and as many soldiers, and this, with the lieutenant and ourselves will give us fifteen."

"Enough, if Lieutenant Worth picks the men."

"Which he will do, and yet a few more would not be amiss."

"Well, suggest it, for he is most reasonable."

"He is indeed, and one of the bravest and most brilliant young officers I ever knew."

"You are right there, and he is making his way well to the front."

Seeing that they were not distressing their horses, the two kept them at a still more rapid pace, and it was just before midnight that they dashed up to the camp.

Lieutenant Worth was at once aroused and the situation explained to him, and before the sergeant could deliver the colonel's message he cried:

"I'll take a score of men and go back with you, for that villain must be run down."

"You know your men best, Cody, so pick out from the three commands together here, ten of your best scouts, and let them take the finest horses, whether their own or not."

"You, Sergeant Fallon, pick a corporal and ten troopers, and see that they get the very best mounts."

"The quartermaster shall at once get supplies for a couple of weeks' stay, for we must go well prepared, and—"

"I go too, Lieutenant Worth, for I shall be needed."

"Ah, Denmead, always the right man in the right place, and I am glad you spoke, for I will be glad to have you along."

"Now, prepare all, for we must be in the saddle within the hour."

There was no use saying wait until dawn, for the dashing young cavalry officer said:

"We will go ten miles on our way and then camp, for I'll feel then as though we had started."

"If your horses are blown, Cody, you can take others."

"I'll ride another, sir, as will Sergeant Fallon, and take an extra pack-horse too, so the three we pushed to the camp here can run loose and thus rest."

"Yes, and I've ordered half a dozen extras driven along loose in case of break-downs, for there must be no delay on this ride."

The party who were to make the ride then had supper, and in just one hour after the arrival of Buffalo Bill and the sergeant in camp, the party, twenty-five all told and thirty-five horses, rode off on their expedition to rescue Lucille Fallon.

"Set the pace, Cody, and don't make it too slow," said Lieutenant Worth, and Buffalo Bill rode to the front, the sergeant with him.

Behind rode Lieutenant Worth and Surgeon Denmead, then the corporal and his troopers, the pack-horses and extras following, and the scouts bringing up the rear in two detachments, under Will Palmer and Hugh Hardin respectively.

When ten miles had been passed over Buffalo Bill began to look for a camping-place, when Lieutenant Worth called out:

"The horses are all right, Cody, so give them another hour of it, and we'll reach a good halting-place."

Another hour was given them, and the scout led the command to a fine camp where water, grass and wood were plentiful.

They quickly staked out the animals, one scout was put on duty, with orders to call a relief after one hour, and he to do likewise, until four hours had passed, when breakfast would be eaten and the ride resumed.

The men threw themselves down upon their blankets and were soon fast asleep.

Feeling that all was being done that was possible, for the rescue of his daughter, Sergeant Fallon, knowing his need of rest, followed Buffalo Bill's example and dropped off into a deep slumber.

Two soldiers and two scouts were awakened by the sentinel to get breakfast, and the others were allowed to sleep on until it was ready.

The meal disposed of, the horses were saddled, and mounting, away they started on another mad ride, Lieutenant Worth calling out:

"It is better to kill a horse or two, Cody, than miss the outlaws at the river, so push hard, for the animals will stand it, and we'll halt a couple of hours at noon."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FOUND.

BUFFALO BILL was leading the command as guide and scout, and constantly by his side kept Sergeant Fallon, while Lieutenant Worth and Doctor Denmead were not far in the rear.

The halt was made at noon, but not for two hours, as a consultation and look at the horses showed that they were not yet used up, save two, that were left behind.

"They will get a rest when we reach the river to-night, so push them for all they are worth, Bill," said the lieutenant.

"Yes, sir, and we must reach the river while it is daylight, to find that trail, and so wait there, for he may come up in the night and go across," answered Buffalo Bill.

The halt was therefore made at noon for an hour only, and yet the horses were stripped and rubbed down, while they fed.

Then the party mounted again and pushed on, the scout setting even a faster pace than before.

He was determined to strike the river above the upper ford, and from there up look for the trail coming out where the outlaw crossed.

To do this, hard riding must be made.

Another horse dropped out during the afternoon, and a second soon after.

They were left by the trail side.

Buffalo Bill glanced back to see if he was pushing too hard, but the lieutenant waved him on, and the sergeant's face brightened, as he said in a low tone:

"God bless that noble young man."

"Oh, he's got the nerve to push to the end," answered Buffalo Bill, and as he spoke Lieutenant Worth called out:

"Your horses can stand the strain, Bill, so

you and the sergeant push on ahead, and I'll send what men after you I can pick out with the best animals.

"The rest of us can follow, but you go on and try and pick up the trail."

The splendid animals ridden by Buffalo Bill and the sergeant were yet capable of hard work, as was also the one ridden by Lieutenant Worth, but he felt that he would remain with the men.

So he picked out several of the scouts whose horses seemed less distressed and told them to push on with their chief.

So on went Buffalo Bill, the sergeant and four scouts following, the rest bringing up the rear at a slower pace.

Buffalo Bill looked back and saw that they were dropping the command fast enough for the good of the animals, and so held at the reserved pace he had set.

On, on, they went, halting at a brook for a few swallows of water, again a few mouthfuls of grass, and then on once more.

The river at last came in sight as they descended a ridge.

They had crossed the trail leading back from the upper ford half an hour before.

Riding down from the ridge they reached the river just three miles above the ford.

Here they halted for a moment, two of the scouts' horses having failed them.

The animals were all panting like hounds, and the riders relieved them of their weight, and began to go on foot along the river-bank, the scout remarking:

"There is certainly no crossing between us and the ford, for I have ridden this far above it several times before."

"It is above that the secret crossing is, and the outlaw would hardly have risked it had it been nearer to where the soldiers' camp was."

"So I think," the sergeant remarked.

So on they went, the scout and sergeant walking rapidly and viewing every foot of ground, while the scouts followed behind leading their horses.

Thus a mile had been gone over, and the face of the sergeant grew anxious, for he saw that the sun was drawing near the horizon.

Buffalo Bill's face was placid, for he never revealed his thoughts, no matter what was his distress of mind; yet he, too, watched the declining sun with anxious eyes.

On they went, limbering up their legs from long riding by rapid walking.

At last they came to a rise when the scout halted.

He saw that there were two ridges running to the river, a deep ravine between them.

Across the river he saw that there was a sand-bar, and a point of sand stretched out into the stream, the swift flow being on the side where they stood.

The channel here looked narrow, too, and examining the water it appeared to be more shallow than above and below.

"Sergeant."

"Yes, Mr. Cody."

"I think here is the crossing."

"The same thought was mine, sir."

"Of course they would have to swim their horses for several hundred yards, but by riding out upon that sand-bar which is well above, they would land, forced down by the current, about at this ravine, in fact, if they were swept by, would not land at all."

"If they crossed from this side, sir?"

"They would have to ride in yonder above at that break in the bank, and that would bring them on the sand-bar point."

"I will go there and see if they could get down to the river, while you look down in the ravine for their trail," and the scout started on his way, to suddenly call out to the sergeant who was climbing down the ravine:

"Here is the trail coming out, and there were a score of them."

CHAPTER XLIX.

TOO LATE.

THE sergeant, at the call of Buffalo Bill, hastened to where he stood.

He was passing around the descent to the river between the two ridges, and had found a trail.

Reaching the spot, the trail was there,

made by all of two dozen horses, they decided after an examination.

"It goes straight down the ravine to the river, and was, as you said, the landing when they rode in from the bar."

"Yes, sergeant."

"We will leave the boys here and go on to that break up yonder, for there is where I feel sure they must cross, and if my memory serves me right there is no other for many a long mile above."

Calling to the scouts to halt there where they then were, Buffalo Bill and the sergeant pushed rapidly on to the break in the bank nearly a mile above.

They reached it just as the sun touched the horizon, and a glance showed that it was a ravine like the one below, narrow, rocky and steep.

But from that point a descent into the river could rapidly be made, and as the stream had a bend there, a swim would carry them across for a landing on the sand bar below.

Going around to the head of the ravine, Buffalo Bill and the sergeant came to a halt, as though they had been shot at.

"My God!" exclaimed the sergeant.

"Too late!" said Buffalo Bill.

"They have crossed," and the sergeant's face was white.

"Yes, not two hours ago from the looks of the trail."

"That man knows the secret pass through Skeleton Range, or he could never have reached here in this time, for that cuts off all of thirty miles in coming from the Overland Trail to the upper ford."

"Yes, I have followed the regular trail, long ago, but knew of no secret pass."

"There is one however, as an old trapper once led me through it."

"The outlaw must have known it to have reached here before us, riding as we have, for remember, it is just twenty-four hours since we left the fort and we have come a little over a hundred miles."

"Very true, we have done our duty but in vain, for my daughter is still in that man's power and has been carried on to the Indian camp in the mountains."

"I fear so."

"What can we do now?"

"I'll tell you."

"We came here on foot, so have left no trail."

"We will go to the lower ravine and join the boys, then draw off for a camp, for horses and men must rest."

"True."

"We passed a spot some distance back that will make a splendid camp, back from the river, and where the fires cannot be seen by the Indians who must still be guarding the fords."

"Yes."

"Now to see if this trail was made by the same party, for I took notice of peculiarities I can readily discover, as there were two shod horses, and large animals, the others being ponies."

"That means the outlaw's two horses and the ponies of the Indian allies."

"Just that," and the two began to examine the trail.

"Yes, here are the tracks of the two iron-shod horses, Mr. Cody."

"There are more shod horses, six more, sergeant, and that means—"

"The six horses of the stage coach," quickly interrupted the sergeant.

"Just that."

"That tells the story, then, for the other tracks agree."

"It is growing dark, so let us hurry back and make a camp for the tired men."

They walked rapidly back down the river-bank, joined the two scouts awaiting them, and told the sad story to them that they were—

"Too late!"

Mounting their horses they rode back in the gathering twilight for a mile, when they met the other two scouts, who had dropped back on account of their horses.

They had halted just where the scout intended to make the night camp, and seeing that the place was thoroughly sheltered, they began to build fires.

Just as the fires began to burn well, the command came in sight, and the tired horses gained courage and hastened on.

They were soon all there, the stragglers dropping in one by one, and a sadness fell upon all as they heard the ill-omened words—"Too late."

Lieutenant Worth listened with stern face and flashing eyes.

Then he said:

"Our first duty is to care for our worn-out cattle."

"Then we will have supper, and afterward hold a council of war, Bill, and decide what must be done, for Miss Fallon shall be rescued; yes, and that villain Lamar must be hanged."

"Those two duties must and shall be done."

CHAPTER L.

THE FORGED LETTER.

LUCILLE FALLON was surprised when she received a letter by mail, posted at Pioneer City, and addressed in the well-known hand of her lawyer.

It was short, and merely told her that certain legal technicalities having arisen that required her signature, and her father's, to papers he held, he had decided to come himself and get them, and had reached Pioneer City, where, on account of an attack of rheumatism, he was compelled to halt and ask the sergeant and herself to come to him.

As it would be lonely for her, he suggested that she ask some lady friend to accompany her, and he would expect them by the next coach.

Lucille expressed her surprise that any business had been so important as to bring the lawyer out to the Wild West, but she concluded to go, and regretted the absence of her father.

Perhaps she would do without him, and if not, she would urge the lawyer to return with her to the fort where he could be well cared for.

Mrs. Lamar wished to accompany her; but Lucille felt that she was not really strong enough yet to stand the journey, and so she went alone.

There were no other passengers, and with a small sachel as her only baggage, she mounted to the box with Jack Jessop and rolled away from the fort.

She enjoyed the bright morning and beautiful scenery immensely, and Jack was glad to entertain his fair companion.

The bridge was crossed over Canyon River, and then began the pull up the long canyon hill.

At last the summit was reached and they were on Monument Hill, where the cross over the dead still stood, and upon it the warning of the Red Hand Riders to Buffalo Bill.

"I'd like to read that again," said Lucille, and Jack Jessop drew rein, remarking cheerily:

"Well, miss, the Red Riders is wiped out, save their chief, so there is no more fear of hold-ups now on this trail."

The words had scarcely left his lips when suddenly, as though by magic, a score of forms arose, it appeared from the ground.

They came from behind trees and rocks, and they came like so many apparitions.

They were all dressed in buckskin, wore slouch hats and masks, while they carried rifles in their hands and were armed with a belt of weapons as well.

They were all on foot, save one.

That one was mounted on a fine horse, and came out from behind a group of rocks. He sat his horse splendidly, wore a belt of arms, but carried no rifle.

A broad sombrero sheltered his head, his hair fell upon his shoulders, and he was dressed in a black suit with gold-coin buttons.

His face was masked completely, and his hands were covered with red gauntlet gloves.

There was no mistaking the man, for it was Captain Eagle, chief of the Red Hand Riders.

"That Imp of Satan, ther chief o' ther Red Hands, by all that's holy," growled Jack Jessop.

Lucille turned pale, yet remained perfectly calm, while she said:

"He has little to rob me of this time, Jack."

Up to the coach rode the chief, while he bent low in his saddle and said:

"We have the pleasure of meeting again, Miss Fallon."

"The pleasure is all yours, sir."

"And Jack, you and I have met before," resumed the chief, paying no attention to Lucille's sarcastic reply to his salutation.

"Yes, and some day we'll meet once too often for your good, Cap," said Jack.

"Well, what have you aboard to interest me, other than the fair lady on the box with you?"

"Nothing, for I is running light; but I was in hopes you was dead."

"Oh, no, I am still on deck as you see."

"But have you no dust from the mines on board?"

"Not an ounce."

"No money?"

"This hain't after pay time as you knows, so no money goes east on this run."

"Well, I believe you, but I shall search your old hearse all the same."

He called to his followers and they completely surrounded the coach.

Then he began the search personally.

"What is in these boxes in the rear boot?"

"Weapons sent to Colonel Buck from the fort sutler: he ordered them."

"They are a treasure."

"Give me your hatchet."

The driver passed it down and knocking open the boxes the chief said:

"Good! repeating-rifles and revolvers, just what I need; yes, and ammunition too, with bowie-knives and belts."

"Ah! here are a couple of fine saddles and bridles too, and a roll of superb *serapes*."

"Why, Jack, I am in luck, especially as a decoy letter I wrote got Miss Fallon into my power, though I regret to see that her father and one other I hoped for, are not along."

"Miss Fallon, the letter from your lawyer I forged."

"It has done its duty."

CHAPTER LI.

A CAPTIVE.

WHEN the outlaw chief spoke of the letter Lucille's face flushed and her eyes brightened with indignation and anger.

She knew that she was the victim of a plot, and quick as a flash she whipped out from her belt a small revolver and threw it forward, her finger upon the trigger.

There was no tremor of the hand, the act was one of determined intention to kill the man, and she would have done so then and there, for he was caught wholly off his guard, had not Jack Jessop struck up her hand just as she pulled trigger.

The bullet, as it was, cut through the corner of the chief's sombrero."

"A close call, that."

"Jack Jessop, you saved my life, so I'll not kill you as I intended to do—that act saved you."

"I didn't do it for you, but to save her," grunted Jack.

"Oh, I know your intention, but the act was the same, for you saved me from death."

"Miss Fallon, you are as quick as a flash as a drawer, and a ready hand with a revolver."

"You owe it to Jack Jessop that you do not suffer for your intended taking of my life, for my men would have been quickly avenged upon you."

"Give me that weapon, please."

She sat, white, silent and almost despairing.

But she turned and handed the weapon to Jack Jessop, who in turn surrendered it with his own weapons to the chief.

"Get off the box, Jack."

The man obeyed.

"Now, Miss Fallon, do you also alight?"

She also obeyed.

"Jack, I shall put these irons on your ankles."

"You can walk with them, for the chain is a foot long, but slowly."

"You will have to walk to the next station, and you'll hardly reach there before night."

"I need your horses, so will take them, and I have pack-animals along, too, for the plunder."

"Miss Fallon, I have a horse with side-saddle for you, so you see I came prepared,

even to good food for you, a canvas shelter and blankets."

"You intend to take me a prisoner?" said Lucille.

"I certainly do, and hold you until I get the big ransom I shall demand."

"My poor, poor father."

"He is fortunate in not having come with you."

"Jack, there is no help for it, so I'll make the best of it," and Lucille turned to the driver.

"Tell my father what happened, and to arrange for the ransom, as he can do, provided it is not too large, for there is a limit, you know, and I am not of age yet, so funds cannot be readily gotten beyond a certain sum."

"Tell him not to delay, for I wish my freedom, and attempt no rescue, but pay the ransom."

"Good-by, Jack," and Lucille held out her hand.

"You is the gamest leetle gal I ever seen," said Jack Jessop, and the tears came into his eyes, and turning to the outlaw he continued:

"Some day there'll come a settlement for your red deeds, and cruel treatment of this leetle lady, and I'd show you no more mercy than I would a snake."

The chief laughed, snapped the irons on Jack's ankles, then continued his search of the coach, taking several things of value.

Then he called to his silent men to bring up the horses, and the strip to team of the harness.

They quickly did so, and a horse was led up with a lady's saddle.

Lucille sprung to her seat without aid, making the remark in an indifferent tone:

"It is lucky I wore my riding-habit, fearing some accident."

The things from the coach, arms and other articles, with the harness, cushions and rubber coverings, were soon packed on the horses, the chief mounted and turning to the driver said:

"Good-by, Jack."

"I will not leave you unarmed, so here is your belt again."

"My compliments to Buffalo Bill, and tell him that some day I'll get his scalp."

With a wave of the hand he rode off, leaving Jack Jessop gazing after them, his eyes full of tears at the fate of poor Lucille whom he was powerless to aid.

But Jack did not hesitate long, for he at once turned his steps down the trail toward Pioneer City, carrying the mails, which had not been disturbed, upon his back.

He could not walk fast, ironed as he was, and it was night when he reached the relay station utterly exhausted.

But he quickly had the iron chain hammered in two by the stock-tender, and mounting a horse, the manacles still about his ankles, he rode on to Pioneer City and reported what had happened, starting out at once again with a harnessed team after his coach.

The stock-tender at the station he had sent off at full speed to the fort to report the affair to Colonel Carr.

The stock-tender reached the fort after midnight, and half an hour after a lieutenant with his troop and six of Buffalo Bill's scouts had started for Monument Hill to pick up the trail of the outlaws at dawn, and follow it, Colonel Carr believing that he could thus aid Lieutenant Worth and his party who were pushing on to the river to head off the lawless band.

Jack Jessop took his dismantled coach into Pioneer City with all haste, and then went to a blacksmith to get his manacles removed.

He found the town all excitement over the affair, and learned from Colonel Buck the stage-agent there, that a stranger had come into Pioneer City and purchased a side-saddle and a lot of provisions and other things, remaining but a short while and stating that he was from the Fort Advance settlement.

"That man was the outlaw," said Jack Jessop.

And he was right.

CHAPTER LII.

THE FLIGHT.

THE outlaw chief placed himself by the side of Lucille as they started away from Monument Hill, and she said quickly:

"There is no possible chance of my escape, so ride on ahead and I will follow you."

"You do not wish me by your side?"

"I do not."

"I wish to talk to you."

"I do not care to converse with you."

"But I have something of importance to say."

"I do not care to hear it."

"But you must, and the trail admits of two riding abreast now, and will not later on and I will not disturb you long."

"I have no power to enforce my wish."

"I would talk to you about my—wife."

"Ah! I will hear you."

"You carried her away with you from her inland retreat?" and the chief removed his mask, revealing his handsome, yet evil-stamped face.

Lucille gazed at him curiously, for she had never before seen him unmasked.

"You are a greater sinner than I deemed you," she said.

"How so?"

"A man with your face, your intelligence, capable of great things, to descend to what you are, is deserving of no sympathy, nothing but contempt."

"You are bold."

"I speak as I feel; but to your wife: what of her?"

"You took her from the retreat?"

"No, Lieutenant Worth and Buffalo Bill did that, I only used my influence to have her leave a life that was a burden to her."

"She was ill?"

"Yes, one the scout knew as Injun Nick, whom she had known in former years as Nicholas Burt—"

"Ha! Injun Nick! was then Nicholas Burt?"

"I felt that I had met him before; but to your story?"

"Driven by Buffalo Bill from Pioneer City he sought to join your band, met your wife, caught her with his lariat, and she believes he would have killed her had not Buffalo Bill, on his trail, or yours, been near and shot him."

"Your wife was severely hurt by being dragged from the saddle, and she was carried to her home by the scout."

"Then he brought a surgeon of Lieutenant Worth's command to see her, when they later came in search of your retreat to rescue your prisoners, and she was soon able to be carried to the fort, where she found refuge in my father's home with me."

"You were away at the time, or you would have been taken and hanged."

"Doubtless; but of my wife?"

"What would you know of her?"

"She has told you of her past?"

"Enough for me to know that where she once loved you devotedly, she now despises and hates you, and I do not wonder at it."

"She is still my wife, and I love her."

"I do not wonder at your love for her any more than I do at her hatred for you."

"You are complimentary."

"No, only just."

"She is my wife, and ever will be."

"Not for long, if Buffalo Bill has his way."

"Ha! what do you mean?"

"He will make her a widow."

"Curse him!"

"Curses, like chickens, often go home to roost."

"You have too pointed a tongue, girl; but do you know what my wife's intentions are for the future?"

"To remain at the fort as my guest until she pleases to go East to live."

"She shall never go, for she must go with me when I leave."

"I sincerely hope she will not go that way."

"Which way?"

"At the end of a rope."

The chief muttered an oath, and for awhile was silent.

Then he said:

"Some day I will tell you a secret that will surprise you, Miss Fallon."

"Why not now, for a woman hates to wait, you know, once her curiosity is aroused."

"No, you will be my captive for some little time, and I will tell you before you are set free."

"I shall ask the sum of just thirty thou—"

sand dollars for your ransom, and when that is paid you shall go free."

"You will not get it."

"Why?"

"Well, though I have property of considerable value, neither my lawyer and guardian, or myself, can get money on it until a certain time, and the cash that can be gotten is just that which is left over from the sum appropriated to pay certain fees, my schooling and living."

"And what does that amount to?"

"About eighteen thousand dollars."

"Somehow I believe you, so I will take what I can get."

"Twenty thousand, then, shall be the price, for the balance can be raised, doubtless your father has it, and when that is paid, you shall go free."

"I shall arrange all matters so as to place no difficulties in the way, and meanwhile you shall be treated with every respect, and given what comforts I can allow you."

CHAPTER LIII.

AN OBLIGING CAPTOR.

THERE was something in the manner of the outlaw toward her that Lucille could not understand, and that was his marked respect.

He had frankly told her that he loved his wife, and hoped to get her to come again with him, and he said nothing that was not courteous during their afternoon's ride.

When it grew near sunset he ordered a halt, sought a secluded spot for his captive, had her canvas shelter put up, and placed before her a good supper, after which he left her with the words:

"I shall halt here for four hours, and then it will be six more in the saddle, so get what rest you can."

She enjoyed her supper, spread her blankets, and was soon fast asleep.

A call awakened her, and fifteen minutes after they were again in the saddle, this time the chief riding ahead of her, his masked followers coming along behind her.

"Why do they mask still? for they are all Indians, I have discovered," she said to the chief.

"You are not so sure of that."

"Oh, yes, I am," was the confident reply.

"I wasn't born in the West but I know an Indian when I see one."

Another long ride through the darkness of six hours, and the chief called a halt two hours before dawn.

Again Lucille was placed in a secluded spot, her shelter put up and she was made comfortable, the chief remarking:

"We will not move for five hours this time, so you will have another rest, so make the best of it."

Again she slept soundly and when she awoke the sun was shining brightly.

She at once realized her position and sighed.

But she went to a rivulet near and made her toilet, then sat down on a rock and ate the breakfast which the chief had cooked for himself.

He had killed a deer, and gave her a nice steak, some bacon broiled on the coals, a crisp hoe-cake and cup of coffee in which there was some condensed milk and sugar he had brought from Pioneer City.

She ate heartily, mounted her horse and again took her place behind the chief, who remarked quietly:

"As you can see through masks, Miss Fallon, I told my men to take them off."

"Yes, they are Indians, and a cruel-looking lot they are, though with hearts that are not as evil as their master's, for their training has been to kill, torture and rob an enemy, yours far different."

He bit his lip but made no reply, and again rode to the front.

After a short while he said:

"Buffalo Bill and your father are up at the fords with Lieutenant Worth, hunting Indians as you doubtless know."

"My father is away with a command, but it is supposed at the fort that Buffalo Bill is dead."

"It is not so."

"How do you know?"

"I cannot believe that he is dead, for that man bears a charmed life."

"No, he will live for me to one day take his scalp."

"You have a very fine head of hair yourself, sir, from which a scalplock could be very readily taken by Buffalo Bill, if he still lives, and I hope he does."

The man winced under the words, and said:

"Well, Jack Jessop got in during the night, and doubtless sent word of the hold-up of the coach both to the fort and to Pioneer City, so that the troops, if sent at once on the trail, are now about Monument Hill."

"On your trail?"

"Yes, but a long distance behind, for we are over forty miles from the hill, and before night I shall cross the river into the Indian country, as I know of a secret trail over the mountain range you see ahead of us which will cut off half a day's hard ride and treat you to a view of some magnificent scenery as well."

"You are very thoughtful, to treat me to grand scenery under such circumstances."

"Well, I wish to make your captivity as pleasant to you as possible; but I have to ride hard as I will only feel safe when I get you across the river."

"And I shall be less safe."

"You will be all right, for I will take you up into the village of the old chief, Iron Eyes, and there is a good cabin there which no Indian will live in."

"It was built by a renegade white man who fled with his family to the Indians, and was adopted into the tribe."

"The man, his wife and the children died off, and their cabin still remains there in good condition, furnished as they left it, for they brought all their furniture with them in their flight."

"I shall appreciate being separated from the Indians at least."

"Oh, yes, you will be free from them, for the tepees nearest the cabin are not occupied, but all used to store pelts, food and the hundred and one things an Indian snakes in."

"It is in fact the store village, and the nearest living tepee to you is that of the young chief Death Face, and you can trust him, for he is of a most chivalrous nature."

"The other Indians will not go near you, I'll see to that, so you will be alone; but that will not mean that you will have a chance to escape, as that would be impossible for a man to do, let alone a young girl."

Lucille made no reply, and the chief did not again break the silence until they had climbed the mountain range by a most dangerous path.

CHAPTER LIV.

CROSSING TO SAFETY.

"Look behind you now, Miss Fallon."

The outlaw had halted as he neared the top of the range, having asked Lucille not to look behind her until he told her to do so, as he did not wish to spoil her view.

She wheeled her horse and glanced behind her, and an exclamation of delight burst from her lips.

Long she gazed in perfect rapture, and forgetfulness of herself, as she beheld miles of mountain, valley and plain scenery.

At last she said:

"If Lot's wife could have had such a view as this to tempt her, I would not have blamed her for looking behind her."

The chief laughed at the words, and then said:

"That little grove there shall be your noon-day camping-place, directly upon the summit of the mountain, so that you can see in every direction."

"Down on the other side, a few hundred yards, is a plateau, a valley in the mountain-top, with a stream running through it, and there we shall go on and halt, for there is good grass for the horses."

"When you get tired of the view come to where we are and dinner will be ready."

Reaching the little grove of pines Lucille again cried out in admiration, for before her now was a still grander view, for flowing through a vast valley was a large river.

"Do you see yonder mountains, miles below the river?"

"Yes."

"It is there that the Indian village is, and that will be the end of our trail."

"Just there, where you see a bald hill by the river, is where we will cross by a ford but very few know of, for none of my Indians know of it, and it is one no one could find save by accident, as I did by seeing a herd of deer take to the water and swim across."

"Something frightened them on the other side, a pack of wolves I think, and they swam back again, landing at another point below."

It showed me a crossing place, and I let several of my men into the secret and used to send couriers that way to and from my retreat to the Indian village."

"As the known fords are now guarded by troops, we will cross this way if you are not too much alarmed."

"And if I am you will go to the regular ford?"

"Oh, no, I am no fool to run upon the soldiers."

"What will you do if I have not the nerve to go across?"

"Simply go around by a ford that will give us two days' hard travel."

"Never mind me then, cross by the secret ford, for I can venture it if you can."

The outlaw then rode on, leading her horse, the Indians having gone to the camping place.

Lucille was alone on the mountain-top, and gazed about her in rapt admiration.

At last she said:

"If I had my horse and a good start, I would risk finding my way back to the Overland Trail, for I watched all along closely, and my horse would retrace his tracks, I believe."

"But, no, I must accept the situation as it is, and take things as they come."

"The outlaw, from what he says, seems to think the fords are guarded by a large force, so I will not deceive him."

"Even now my father may be within a few miles of me, and oh! if he only knew."

She weakened for a moment, but quickly rallied from her emotions and continued her gaze for quite a while.

Then she strolled about the mountain-top, plucked a few wild flowers clinging among the rocks, and next started down to the camp with the remark:

"Ah! I get the odors of boiling bacon and coffee, for the wind blows up from the camp."

"It makes me hungry, so I'll go down to dinner."

Down the trail she went to soon come upon the trail, and she was glad to find dinner ready and enjoyed it.

Mounting again, the chief said:

"We must ride hard now, for the river will have to be behind us when the sun sets."

"Are you very tired, Miss Fallon?"

"Oh, no."

So on they went at a very slow pace for several miles in going down the mountain, and then when they struck good traveling, they pushed rapidly on, the chief not sparing the horses now.

The sun was over an hour high when the river came into view.

A halt was made to cool the horses off a little, then, riding down a steep ravine to the water, the chief said:

"I'll take your bridle-rein here, Miss Fallon."

"Permit me to fold this rubber blanket around your feet and form, and you will not get in the least wet."

"Let your horse have full rein and do not be alarmed."

"I am not in the least alarmed," was the reply, and she permitted the chief to fold the rubber blanket about her in such a way that she would not get wet when her horse was back-deep in swimming.

Then the chief rode in, she followed, her horse led, and the Indians came behind with the pack-horses.

The animals began to swim almost immediately, and the brave girl rather enjoyed the scene than dreaded it.

After a long swim a sand-bar was reached, they landed in safety, and not to let the horses get cold, the chief pushed on for a couple of miles and went into camp with the remark:

"We are safe now, Miss Fallon, and you can rest through the night."

CHAPTER LV.

IN THE INDIAN VILLAGE.

WHAT the outlaw called safety, was for himself and the Indians alone, and far from it for poor Lucille.

He believed that the three fords were guarded still, that he might run upon a scouting party from the soldiers' camps at any moment, and he did not feel at ease until he had crossed the river with his captive.

It was bold in him to venture so near the upper ford, believing a party of soldiers to be there, yet he knew that the wild nature of the country through which the river flowed above, would keep him from crossing for many a long mile, and for Lucille's sake alone, to his credit be it said, he wished to cross by the unknown ford, though strictly speaking it was not a ford, but a place where a horse or man might get over by swimming.

Lucille had escaped getting wet in crossing, and, as before, was given a secluded camping place to herself.

The chief made it most comfortable, as there was no hurry now, by cutting pine boughs and building a wicky-up and placing the pine straw as a couch, with the cushions from the coach upon it.

A little fire was built near, just to make it more homelike, the chief said, and an extra supper was prepared for all.

Night fell, and soon after supper the tired girl, for she was tired, sunk to sleep in a few minutes.

She awoke once in the night, to hear an owl hooting in the trees not far away, and a coyote yelping a short distance from camp.

But she banished all thought with an effort of her will and went to sleep again, awakening only when the sun had risen.

"I hope you rested well last night, Miss Fallon?"

"I enjoyed a good night's rest, thank you."

"A ride of a little over thirty miles, and you will be in your new home to-night."

"Home!"

"Do not desecrate the name, for it will be a prison, not a home to me," she said bitterly.

"Breakfast is ready for you."

She ate it, her spirits returned, and once more she mounted for the ride.

Toward noon they began to climb the range she had seen from far across the river, and soon after the chief halted for dinner.

Then up the steep trail they climbed again, Lucille glancing back from time to time to behold the scenery, and while the sun was yet two hours above the horizon they came to a pass in the mountains, where she suddenly beheld an Indian sentinel standing in the trail ahead of them.

"Where is the chief?" asked the outlaw in the Indian tongue, and which was as Hebrew to Lucille.

The Indian sentinel pointed and soon after there came toward them a horseman that at once riveted Lucille's gaze.

He was the Indian chief Death Face, and he had just come down from the village to the pass, which his band of braves was guarding.

He was resplendent in a new costume, from boots to war-bonnet, for he had on a pair of handsome cavalry boots.

Sitting his horse with conscious power, armed with the white man's weapons of revolvers and bowie-knife, his face hideously painted, and mounted upon an animal that was bedecked in barbaric splendor, Death Face struck Lucille as being the most remarkable being she had ever gazed upon.

The young chief fairly started as his eyes fell upon her, and the outlaw, after greeting him said:

"Death-Face, I have been on a raid into the white man's territory, and this lady is my captive, whom I shall sell back to her father for a large price."

To the utter amazement of Lucille the young chief replied in perfect English:

"I do not believe in the theory of my people, chief, of making war upon women and children, and I am surprised that you, as a white man, should do so; but that is your affair, not mine, only treat her well."

"That she will tell you I have done."

"I wish to place her in the renegade's cabin in your camp?"

"You can do so."

The outlaw and his captive were then riding on, when he halted and said:

"Chief Death Face, those braves of yours, whom I took with me, I shall arm with repeating-rifles and revolvers."

"I also have a pair of fine revolvers, a knife and a rifle for you, with a very handsome buckskin suit sent by an officer at the fort to a friend in the East, with slouch hat and all."

"They will fit you, I am sure, and I wish you to accept them, as well as several fine Mexican serapes."

"Thank you, Captain Eagle, I will take them."

"You have done well, I see, on your raid?"

"Oh, yes."

"Come to my quarters in the village to-night."

"I will."

"But have you any word of the soldiers?"

"They are still on the other side, though I did not see them."

"I supposed they had gone, for we had seen no camp-fire smokes for three days."

"It may be a trick, so still be cautious and guard the fords, especially now that I have a captive here for whose rescue Colonel Carr would doubtless send his whole force."

With this the chief rode on, muttering to himself:

"I must win that fellow with presents, for he will be the next chief after Iron Eyes, and he has as much influence now."

"He speaks English like a pale-face, and acts like one, too."

"There is some secret about him that I cannot fathom."

CHAPTER LVI.

"AT HOME."

THE chief had not ridden far before Lucille came up alongside of him.

She saw now about her in a valley-like canyon a camp of half a thousand Indians.

They were in full war-paint, and gazed savagely at her as she rode by, yet were gloating in her capture.

Once through the canyon, and the trail led down into a beautiful valley in which was the village of old Iron Eyes.

Lucille uttered a cry as the view burst upon her, for through the valley ran a mountain stream, upon both sides of which for several miles were the tepees of the Indians, the scattered village of the red-men.

The valley was dotted with thousands of ponies, and among the tepees were visible many women and children.

Warriors were riding about, youths were mounted upon bareback ponies, others were playing games, children were bathing in the stream, and squaws were busy getting the evening meal.

At the base of the hills on either side was heavy timber, and above the village towered the mountain ranges.

"What a view for an artist," cried Lucille.

"Yes, it must strike you strangely, Miss Fallon."

"It does; but you did not answer my question?"

"What was that?"

"I asked you, after we came through the camp of braves, who that young chief was?"

"He is called Death Face, and is the next chief in power to old Iron Eyes."

"He is very young?"

"Not over twenty-two, I should say."

"And yet holds such power?"

"He is a born fighter, a plotter, a soldier, and has won his way up, young as he is."

"How is it that he speaks English so well?"

"He was taught by a renegade white man and his family, I believe."

"And also learned from him, I suppose, not to war against women and children."

"He could set you a good example, chief."

"I follow my own inclinations, Miss Fallon."

"So I have discovered."

"But in what part of this village am I to find refuge?"

"Up at the head of the valley, in the cabin I spoke of."

"There must be a couple of thousand Indians here at least."

"Double that number and more, for the village is five miles long, has some twelve hundred tepees, and can put out a force to defend it of two thousand warriors."

"Then there are several other contingent villages in these mountains that claim Iron Eyes as chief."

"It would be a sad day for any force of soldiers to invade these mountains, Miss Fallon, unless they came several thousands strong."

"That is just what I was thinking," answered Lucille.

As they rode into the village the squaws and children rushed toward them to see the new-comer.

But a few words from the outlaw prevented any rudeness, for they held no sympathy for the fair-faced captive.

Lucille paled at sight of them, but remained calm, and rode on by the side of the outlaw, whom she could not but now regard as her protector.

Up through the village they rode, the girl's fears gradually giving place to interest, until at the upper end of the valley, under the shelter of a heavily wooded ridge, the mountain-top, there were visible a number of tepees apart from the others.

"There is your camp, Miss Fallon."

"It is a deserted village, the supply tepees, as I told you."

"Yonder you see your cabin, apart from them, and there you will be safe."

"I shall have a half-breed squaw, who once lived at the fort as an officer's servant, remain there with you, and do your cooking."

"And be my guard also?"

"In a measure, yes, for she will keep the Indians away from you, and you do not need any other guard here, as you could not escape over yonder ridge, unless you have wings."

"The squaw speaks English, and has cooked for me when I have been here, for my own tepee is in the village."

"The cabin is furnished, as I told you, after a rude fashion, and you have your own sachel with clothing, so you will not be uncomfortable," and as they passed a large tepee the outlaw called out to an Indian woman who stood there to approach them.

She did so, and Lucille noticed that her face was lighter than those about her, and she looked neat in her attire.

"Yellow Bird, I wish you to get your traps and come on up to the cabin."

"You are to look after this captive of mine while she is here, and take good care of her."

The woman had glanced at Lucille as she came up, but that was all, and she replied in fair English:

"The Yellow Bird will do as the White Chief bids her."

Then they rode on, and soon halted before the cabin.

It was built of hewn logs, and boards roughly sawn out of hewn timber served as roofing.

There was a porch along the front, and it was certainly a very fine cabin to find in an Indian village.

The chief took a key from a hiding-place, which he appeared to know of, and unlocked the door.

There were four rooms in the cabin, and Lucille saw that it was furnished, though rudely, for the renegade had brought his belongings with him when he had fled from his own people.

"You will be at home here, Miss Fallon."

"Yes, at home!" repeated Lucille, with sarcasm, to add, quickly:

"But it is so much better than I expected, you have treated me so much differently than I anticipated, that I thank you."

CHAPTER LVII.

MAKING AN ACQUAINTANCE.

THE moment that she was left alone by the outlaw, and she saw him and his braves ride away, Lucille Fallon yielded to the prerogative of a woman, and seating herself in the cabin, she burst into tears.

"At home!"

"My God, if this were to be my home, I would rather that the grave should be," she cried bitterly.

She had totally forgotten about the Indian woman until she heard the gently-uttered words:

"Don't cry, Little Pale-face."

She started to her feet, for she was too proud to wish any one to see her weeping.

Before her stood Yellow Bird, the half-breed Indian woman.

She had tidied herself up, and had a bundle under her arms.

Her face was a good one, not cruel, and she said again:

"Don't cry, Yellow Bird be good to you."

Lucille stepped forward and grasped the woman's hand,

"You are good, I can see that."

"You have lived among the pale-faces, the outlaw told me?"

"Yes, my mother was a pale-face squaw, my father a great Indian chief."

"He died, and my mother went back to her people, taking me with her."

"She died, and I work hard for officer's family at fort far away."

"I hear them say:

"She only half-breed Injun, watch her."

"I feel mad, I feel bad, and run away back to my people."

"But some treat me good, one young squaw pretty, just like you, and I love her."

"I love you for her."

"Yellow Bird be good to you."

The tears came into the eyes of Lucille and stepping close up to the woman she kissed her.

It was under the impulse of her loneliness, her sorrow, her helplessness and the kind words spoken to her.

The squaw started as though she had been struck a blow, for it fairly frightened her; but she said quickly:

"Oh yes, Yellow Bird be heap good to Little Pale-face."

Then she set about her work to clean up, just as she had done when living in the officer's family.

She got water from a spring near, and built a fire in the large hearth, so that the cabin soon no longer looked forlorn.

The outlaw had left the stage cushions there, the stores he had bought in Pioneer City and Lucille's sachel, and the young captive was soon quite comfortable, and she began to feel that she had cause to congratulate herself after all that matters were as they were.

In Yellow Bird she believed she had found a friend, and yet Lucille was not one to gush, and decided that there was a very narrow margin between deceit and sincerity in one's appearance, so she wished to know whether the Indian woman was really true or false.

As she watched the squaw preparing supper, she asked her about Death Face the young chief.

"He heap good young chief—heap like pale-face."

"He be great chief some day, and maybe have peace with pale-faces, for he don't like to kill Little Pale-face's people, but big fighter in battle."

"Red people all love Death Face."

"Iron Eyes heap cruel man, kill and scalp pale-face, hate them bad."

"Iron Eyes kill many."

Lucille glanced out of the open window and said half aloud:

"Speak of the devil and his imp appears."

"There comes Death Face now."

He rode up to the front of the cabin and was alone.

Lucille walked out on the piazza and to her surprise he bowed courteously to her and then said:

"I hope you are comfortable here!"

"Comfortable yes, far more so than I anticipated being, but unhappy as you may know, for my people are not your people, my life not your life, we are raised in a different atmosphere and are foes."

He listened to her in deepest attention, gazing fixedly at her and then said:

"I like to hear you talk, for it brings back to me the voice of those I loved, those who are gone."

"Who do you mean?"

"I mean one whom I loved as a father, another who was a mother to me, and a sister and brother."

"They are all gone—dead; but I had not forgotten them, and you bring them back to me now, so I love to look at you, love to hear you talk."

"Speak again, for your voice is as sweet as the murmur of the brook in summer, as sweet as the trilling of the birds, and your face as lovely as the mountain flowers that seem timid just like you."

Lucille listened with rapt attention to the words of the strange young chief, for he spoke with a softness of tone, a look and with words that fell strangely from the lips of an Indian, and were in strong contrast to the hideously painted death-face he had ornamented his countenance with.

CHAPTER LVIII.

DEATH-FACE THE CHIEF.

As though he feared he should not talk to the captive longer, Death Face said:

"I will go now, but I came to see if I could help you, if I could make you more comfortable."

"This was my home once, and I am glad to have you here."

"Do you see those graves under the ridge yonder?—they are buried there, those I loved, and I put white crosses above their graves, and cut their names on them with my knife."

"You can read, then?"

"Oh, yes, and write."

"You will find books in the cabin to read."

"Don't feel bad, for you shall not be harmed, for Death Face says so."

"I will come again."

He wheeled his horse and rode rapidly away, leaving Lucille wondering at her strange Indian acquaintance.

Walking over to the graves under the ridge, Lucille saw that there were four of them, all marked by rude wooden crosses, but it was too dark to see the names, and she hastened back to the cabin, where Yellow Bird had her supper ready.

It was a tempting repast, and eaten with real relish, Lucille talking the while to the squaw and asking her about the young chief Death Face.

She had little more to tell her than what she had already known, or would not tell her more.

She did say that all the maidens in the village were in love with the young chief, but that he seemed to care for none of them.

The firelight was the only light they had in the cabin, and Lucille asked the woman to bring in wood enough to burn all night.

This Yellow Bird did, and then the captive spread some bedding, put the *serapes* the chief had given her over them, and retired for the night, bolting the doors firmly.

Yellow Bird spread her bed in front of the fire, and the two were soon fast asleep.

When Lucille awoke the next morning she found Yellow Bird was getting breakfast, and the squaw told her that the young chief had been there early and left bear and other robes for her, dressed deerskins and plenty of game and fish which he had shot and caught.

The outlaw came after breakfast and asked her how she was, and then said:

"There is a hammock in this house, Death Face told me, so I will swing it on the porch for you."

The hammock was found and swung, and then the outlaw said:

"I have brought you pen, ink and paper, Miss Fallon, and I wish you to write a letter to your father."

"Tell him how you are treated by me, but make known that he must pay the sum of twenty thousand dollars for your ransom."

"The letter will be mailed to him at Pioneer City, and he shall send his answer by Jack Jessop, who will be met by a man whom I will instruct to be on hand."

"Your father must state in his letter if he will pay that ransom on the next run of the coach, and send it by Jack Jessop to be given to my representative."

"If my man is harmed, then I will not answer for your safety."

"But, if he promises to send the money by Jessop, when he is ready to pay it, then you will be returned to him in safety, being given

into Jack Jessop's charge, the third run of the coach after your father writes agreeing to my terms."

"Do you understand, Miss Fallon?"

"Perfectly."

"I will write also, and you shall see my letter."

"Then I will see that the letters are mailed without delay in Pioneer City."

"It can be done none too soon to please me."

"So I thought."

"Now I will leave you, and I will not often trouble you with my presence, and Death Face will see that you have game and food in plenty."

"Good-morning, Miss Fallon."

"One minute, please?"

"Yes."

"You said on the way here that you would tell me a secret some day."

"Somehow I feel that I am interested in that secret."

"You are right, you are."

"Then tell me."

"I believe I will," said the man thoughtfully, and he sat down upon the porch.

Lucille sat in the hammock, using it for a swing, and the strangeness of her situation and surroundings could not but impress her.

"I'll tell you my secret, yes, and perhaps you will then understand that I seek revenge as well as gold from your father."

"By the way, do you think I resemble your father?"

"In form, yes, and in face, also, save for the stamp of wickedness on your countenance."

"No, he is innocent, I evil."

"But we should be alike, for we are brothers."

Lucille sprung out of the hammock and cried fiercely:

"It is false!"

CHAPTER LIX.

THE OUTLAW'S SECRET.

"I TELL you we are brothers, he being several years my senior," said the outlaw.

"My first love was a young and beautiful girl, and though she loved me he stole her from me."

"I do not believe you."

"Well, he married her that is certain—"

"My mother?"

"Oh, no, your mother was his second wife."

"He won my sweetheart from me, married her, and then went to Texas to live."

"I heard afterward that his wife died after two years of wedded life, but I did not know, did not care, and I was not aware of where he was, or what doing until during the Civil War I was taken prisoner by the Confederates, when in my captor, the colonel of a regiment, I recognized my brother."

"He knew me at a glance, and he came to me and we had a long talk together."

"He told me that he had not known of my love for the woman he married, that he had never been told by her, or her parents about an engagement between her and myself, that I was away and he, therefore, could not hear it from my own lips, and hence he had asked her to be his wife."

"He was going to Texas to live, and the marriage was hastened and she went with him, and only when on her dying bed had she confessed to him that she had been engaged to me."

"Then he had written me the truth; but his letter I never received, and I did not believe what he told me."

"Yet it was the truth."

"How do you know?"

"I have his first wife's written confession, in which she told all, and how her parents had told her not to speak of her love affair with you, as he was rich, you were not, having squandered much of your fortune in fast living."

"Her name was Dorothy Armand, and she left her confession with her jewelry and other things that my father placed in my mother's keeping and all of which she left to me."

"Yes, her name was Dorothy Armand, as you say; but she deceived me and I would not believe her dying confession, or take my

brother's word either, for they wronged me and I never forgive a wrong."

"You look to be just such a nature."

"But my father never did you a wrong, whatever, his wife did in deceiving him as to her engagement to you," said Lucille warmly.

"His name is Louis Fallon Lamar, and he was a colonel in the Confederate Army, as I have said, and a Texan ranchero."

"He got me exchanged, I admit, and gave me money; but that did not atone for the past, and I hated him, for even in war he beat me, as he rose to be a colonel of cavalry, I only a captain of infantry."

"He had married again, he told me, and had a daughter; but I was glad to feel that he was ruined by the war."

"What became of him then I never knew, until I recognized him as a soldier in the United States Army, and only a sergeant."

"Then I remembered that I had heard that a Southerner of our name had killed a man East, and had fled to escape the gallows."

"I wrote East, got the particulars, and found that it was my brother Louis."

"I have only hoped to capture him that I might send him back as a fugitive from justice to be hanged."

Lucille's eyes flashed fire, and for a moment she did not speak.

Then she said:

"Let me ask you to look me in the eyes while I tell you what I know about what you have told me of my father."

"I am listening."

"My father did come out of the war ruined almost."

"He had married again, my mother being his second wife."

"He had felt keenly the unhappy circumstances of his first marriage, in fact it cut him to the heart."

"He saved my mother's father's life at the risk of his own, was wounded by the shot intended for my grandfather, who took him to his home where his daughter, my mother, nursed him through a long siege of suffering."

"My mother loved him, and he loved her, so they were married."

"My father went North on business, accompanied a gentleman to his home one night with whom he had some business, burglars broke into the house and the host was shot down and robbed."

"Before he died he stated under oath that it was my father who had killed him; that they had a business deal on hand, my father knew that he had thousands of dollars in his home, and had come into his room at night and killed him."

"My father had been in a distant wing of the house, had arisen at the noise of the struggle, had gone to the aid of his friend to come face to face with you as you fled."

"You were dressed just as he was, you had killed your man, robbed him and were flying."

"Stunned by the recognition my father had been incapable of action and tottering to a seat had remained there until arrested as the murderer."

"Determined not to hang for your crime, and feeling that there was no hope for him, he sprung upon the constable who guarded him, choked him into unconsciousness, secured the keys of his manacles, freed himself and fled."

"He wrote my mother that he was not guilty of the crime, but circumstantial evidence was against him, his flight added seeming proof, and she unfortunately believed that he had committed the deed, and wrote to him."

"Thus a wide gulf was between them and he became a homeless wanderer and fugitive."

"He went to dwell among the Indians, and having been educated as a physician, he became a medicine-man in the tribe, checked a small-pox epidemic in their midst, and became a great chief, honored and loved by them."

"Discovering gold in his wanderings, he hid it away and at last decided to make good use of it."

"So he left the Indian village, carrying his gold on pack-horses, and, going to a settlement, shipped it home to my mother."

"It was a fortune for us, and she gladly received it, for her income was not large,

and long before she had repented of her belief in my father's guilt, and tried in vain to find him."

"One day, just one year ago, my mother received a letter from the judge of the court in the city where the murder was committed which had wrecked my father's life."

"It told of the confession of a prisoner, who had died in prison, that my father was innocent of the crime, that it was his brother who had been the murderer, he, the prisoner, being his ally."

"That he saw the recognition of his brother by my father, and the shock it gave him."

"He stated that the murderer had married a beautiful woman but was living a double life, and told where he could be found."

"But the murderer had committed other crimes, forcing him to become a fugitive, and so he could not be found, nor could my father, who afterward, I learned, had entered the army on the border."

"But my mother was dying then, and I had to cling to her."

"She died, and soon after I had my lawyer find out if Sergeant Louis Fallon was my father, and he did so."

"Then I wrote him that I would come to him."

"You know the rest, and I know that you have wronged my father beyond all forgiveness."

"Yes, you are his crime-stained brother, Loyd Lamar."

CHAPTER LX.

LUCILLE'S DISCOVERY.

THE outlaw chief flushed under the words of Lucille Fallon.

The young girl had been too well informed to suit him.

He had expected to show her father to be a criminal, and she had brought him to book with facts.

"Yes," she continued, "my father always kept a diary."

"I have every one of them, a score of closely written books, and they have told the story of his life, of a wrecked life, one made wretched by a brother's crime, one full of suffering and sorrow."

"I came to him in his humble life as a non-commissioned officer, and to cheer his later years."

"He gave his diaries over to me to read."

"I have read every word of them, and they tell the story of a noble man's cruel struggle against fate."

"I have had a talk with your wife, for knowing my name to be Lamar I spoke of it to her, though father never did."

"She would not speak of the past, and I never connected her husband with being my father's guilty brother—you."

"I know that my father never suspected it."

"But now I know the whole truth, and your wife is to be pitied for having such a husband."

"My father will pay the money, you are welcome to the amount you get for my ransom; but for heaven's sake don't come near me again, unless it is to take me to where you are to get your gold in return for me."

The man made no reply, and to the surprise of Lucille arose and walked away.

She gazed after him for a moment, and then said:

"How strange that he should be my father's brother, have the same blood in his veins as of my poor, dear father, whose only wrong act in a lifetime was to fly from his trial for a crime he had not committed."

"And yet, had he not have done so, they would have hanged him, as they have hanged many an innocent man before."

Putting her jaunty slouch hat on, she strolled over to the graves under the ridge, and read the inscription.

She started as she did so, and cried:

"What! can these graves solve another mystery?"

"Yes, there is the name Roswell Manly, such a peculiar name there could be hardly two, and both rest on this frontier."

"Roswell Manly is a name I saw in my father's diary, as a dear friend of long ago, one who had been a soldier with him in the Confederacy."

"What became of him the diary does not

state, but that is his name, and the other crosses bear the names of his wife and two children."

"And they died here in an Indian village, while my outlaw uncle says they were renegades, but the young Indian chief told me they were those he loved most dearly."

"I will ask him more about them—ah! there comes the young chief now."

He was coming on a brisk walk, and seeing Lucille at the grave, came toward her.

"Chief, I thank you for your kindness to me," she said.

"You are welcome, and I have just left at the cabin for you the buckskin dress and leggins of the little girl who lies in that grave, my sister I called her."

"She made them just before she died and never wore them, and I kept them to remember her by, but give them to you, for they will be better to wear here than that dress."

"I will accept them with pleasure, for they will be just what I need while I stay here."

"But I wish to ask you who Roswell Manly was?"

The young chief looked at the grave, then at Lucille, and replied:

"The pale-faces called him a renegade, and I guess he was."

"He had a gold mine they wanted, and so tried to run him off, and he killed several of them."

"Then he had to go, taking all with him, all that he could carry in wagons."

"He was attacked by Indians, and then Iron Eyes the chief recognized him as one who had saved his life when the pale-faces had him a prisoner, and wished to put him to death."

"So he brought him to his camp, his family and all, and he turned Indian."

"Somehow he became very bitter against his people then, and so did his wife, and he led warriors upon raids against the pale-faces."

"Chief Iron Eyes was not living in this village then, but he made his white brother chief."

"Iron Eyes lived far up the country then in the main village of his tribe, and it was said that there was a pale-face living there, too, one who was a great medicine-man, but I never saw him."

"And Roswell Manly's family all died?"

"Yes, they were very ill, our medicine-men could not cure them, and so they died there in the cabin with fever."

"I was sick, too, but got well."

"And you are Iron Eyes's son, Yellow Bird tells me?"

"I am not his son, for I'll tell you the truth, Little Pale-face, I am of your race."

"You are a white man?" cried Lucille.

"Yes."

"Then why are you here?"

"My father left me in the home of Roswell Manly, while he went to war."

"I was a little boy then, and I grew up with Susie and Billy Manly, as their brother."

"Then I came here with them, and they made an Indian of me, and when Mr. Manly died, Iron Eyes told me I should be his son."

"Those I loved as my parents taught me to read and write, told me of the big world away from here, with cities and people; but they taught me to hate my race, also, and to be an Indian."

"Yet it has hurt me to fight my people, though I have fought Indian tribes with real love for battle."

"Now you know me as I am, I will go and dress up like a pale-face, as I sometimes do, and not let you see me as an Indian again while you are here."

"Why not leave here and go to your father, for you, trained as you have been to hate your people, are guilty of no real wrong."

"I am only an Indian, I know nothing else."

"I do not know whether my father is dead or alive."

"What is your name?"

"Death Face?"

"I mean your real name?"

"Lester."

"And your father's name?"

"It was Lamar."

Lucille uttered a cry, grasped the arm of the painted white man before her, and cried:

"Let me tell you that my father's name is Lamar.

"He married twice, and his first wife had a son whom she named Lester.

"My father took the boy with him to the frontier and left him with a friend, while he went into the Confederate Army.

"He never saw his friend, or his son again, and can it be that Roswell Manly is the one he left him with, for the name is not given in the diary I read, or it escaped me if it was, and is it possible that you are my brother?"

"Your brother, Little Pale-face?" said the young man almost dazed at Lucille's words and manner.

"Yes, my brother, or half-brother whom I never saw, or heard of save through my father's diary.

"Do you know how old you are?"

"I have it all down in a book Mr. Manly left, and it will tell; but I hope you are my sister."

"Well, whether I am or not, you shall no longer be an Indian and stay here, for it is a crime against your race.

"Go now and when you wash that hideous paint off, come back and talk to me."

CHAPTER LXI.

BUFFALO BILL'S BOLD VENTURE.

THE council of war, which Lieutenant Walter Worth said he would hold that night in the camp near the secret crossing of the river, where it was found that the outlaw had escaped across into the Indian country, continued until late at night, the young officer, Surgeon Denmead, the sergeant and Buffalo Bill being the four present.

Talking the matter over, in the light of all the facts with which they were acquainted, they were certain that Lucille had been captured by the outlaw leader.

The letter which the outlaw had told the sergeant he would write to entrap her, had been sent, and so there was no doubt but that he had been on hand to receive his prize.

The Indians had told the sergeant, the last night he had crossed the river, that the outlaw had gone to Pioneer City by a secret ford.

That trail had been found where it had left the river, and the trail where it had entered the river going back had also been discovered.

This proved that the outlaw had secured his captive and hastened with her to the Indian camp.

To rescue her, then, was the question, and Sergeant Fallon at once said:

"There is but one thing for me to do, and that is to put on my disguise and go into the Indian village after her."

"Yes, sergeant, and I will go with you," said Buffalo Bill firmly.

"It would be madness for you to do so, Mr. Cody."

"Oh, no, sergeant, for I would go as an ally, not to keep you company. I would go on foot, not mounted.

"We can cross the river, and while you go down to the ford, I will go over here.

"You can proceed by the regular trail, while I will take it afoot to the mountains, there make for the bald peak we can see, and there you can find me, as I will look for you.

"Afoot, I can readily hide. I will leave no trail, and am afraid of no red-skins trapping me, for I have been within hailing distance of their villages scores of times."

"Pardon me, lieutenant, but do you think Mr. Cody should make the venture?"

"No, sergeant, I do not."

"Nor do I," said the surgeon.

"See here, that sweet little woman is a captive, and I tell you there should be more than one to aid in her rescue.

"I know Indians from 'way back, and I'll guarantee to go to their village and return.

"You, in your disguise, are all right, sergeant, and you may be able to help me escape with her, and come away yourself later.

"We can pick out certain points in the mountains which we can discern, where we can meet, and I feel we can accomplish your daughter's rescue, yes, and get hold of that outlaw by some means also, for I'll not be happy until his chips are called in.

"I go, too, sergeant."

"Well, Cody, I see you are determined, so I yield, for I have every confidence in

your powers to give the red-skins the slip; but what are we to do?"

"Stay right here, lieutenant, until we bring Miss Lucille back, for we may need your support and need it bad."

"All right, I will do as you suggest; but you and the sergeant arrange your plans of action between you."

"We will, sir, to-morrow."

The next morning the scout and the sergeant went up on the range and picked out half a dozen objects on the distant mountains across the river, and agreed to make them points of rendezvous.

Then the sergeant said:

"Mr. Cody, I wish to confide in you."

"Well, sergeant."

"I have a brother who was a wild young fellow, and believed that I had treacherously cheated him out of his lady love, when I knew nothing about his love for her, and she became my wife. She was not Lucille's mother, she being the daughter of my second wife.

"Now my brother never forgave me, and some years after he committed a crime of which I was accused, and it made an outcast, a fugitive of me.

"He married and came West, and the other night when I looked into the face of the man known as Eagle, the Outlaw, I felt sure that he was my brother.

"I have not seen my unfortunate brother for many years, but the face, as I saw it by the flickering camp-fire's light, the voice, impressed me that it was Loyd Lamar.

"Now, if he is my brother he knows that Lucille is my daughter, and that is a relief to my mind.

"His wife, as you know, is Mrs. Lamar, though I never heard her speak of her husband's first name.

"If the outlaw is my brother, and I would almost take oath that he is, I have but one request of you, and that is to kill him, and not capture him to be taken to the fort and hanged."

"My dear sergeant, I had promised myself I would do that on account of his sweet wife, and I will be that more anxious to save him from the gallows now that he is suspected of being your brother," was Buffalo Bill's reply.

That afternoon they started upon their perilous mission, Buffalo Bill crossing the river at the spot where the camp was and the sergeant riding down to the upper ford, to go over after dark and continue on by the trail to the mountains.

But the sergeant in crossing came to grief, for there stood on the other bank as sentinel a young brave who was striving to win a name for himself.

He saw in the moonlight a horse and rider crossing the ford; so, taking aim, the red-skin fired, pulling trigger just as he discovered that it was not a pale-face but an Indian.

The sergeant felt a stinging pain in his shoulder, the blood began to flow; he therefore turned back, fearing that he was seriously wounded, and did not know why he had been fired on.

Riding rapidly back to camp he fell from his horse as he reached there, for he had bled so freely his strength was gone.

Fortunately Surgeon Denmead was there and at once went to work on him, remarking after awhile:

"I have got the ball, Worth, and with care the wound will not be fatal, though serious."

CHAPTER LXII.

THE RESCUER REACHES THE GOAL.

WHEN the young pale-face chief again presented himself before Lucille at her cabin, she was surprised and pleased at the change in him.

She saw a handsome, stern-faced youth who scarcely looked twenty years of age.

His face, hands and neck were very dark, from long exposure, almost the hue of Yellow Bird's the half-breed squaw. His form was compact and wiry, and his hair black as an Indian's and yet waving, falling far below his broad shoulders.

He was dressed in a buckskin coat, leggings and top-boots, and wore a wide-brimmed slouch hat with eagle-feathers in it, for he could not wholly discard his acquired love of ornament.

About his waist was a belt of arms, presented him that morning by the outlaw as he

had said he would do, and altogether the young renegade was a very dashing looking fellow.

He at once told Lucille that he would show her where Roswell Manly's papers were in the cabin and they would look over them together.

This they did, and among them was a Bible in which was written the ages of Manly's children, and that of Lester Lamar, with the following:

"Born in Texas, and son of Louis Fallon Lamar, who left him to my care when he went into the Confederate Army, he having married again, and his first wife making him give her his pledge never to allow her child to be reared by a step-mother."

This was what Lucille read, and she saw that there was no longer any doubt, the "young Indian," as she playfully called him, was none other than her half-brother, four years her senior.

"Now, Lester, your education has been sadly neglected, through no fault of yours, however, and I intend to take you in hand.

"Truthfully speaking, you are nothing more than a renegade pale-face, and did the soldiers capture you as Death Face, they would hang you.

"But I am going to take you in hand, tame you, civilize you, and you are to go back with me, not as Death Face, a young Indian chief, but as a pale-face youth who was captured by the Indians as a boy, as was the case, for you said that Roswell Manly's family were taken prisoners."

"Yes."

"Of course, if the Indians thought you intended to desert them, they would kill you, so we must go slow, and let the outlaw's negotiations for my ransom go on, for you tell me he is going himself to Pioneer City to send his letter and receive the answer."

"Yes, he goes to-night, he said."

"I am glad of it, for we will lay all our plans for escape while he is away, and when he goes with me to get the ransom, you go, too. Then will be our chance, and we can save the money, too."

Such was the plan agreed upon, and from that moment Lucille felt easy in her mind.

Her half-wild young brother visited her often, and it became a new life for him under her gentle influence, and he began to see how evil had been his life.

One afternoon, a week after Lucille's coming to the Indian village as a captive, and while the brother and sister were seated upon the little piazza looking at the sunset, the young man on the chair, the maiden in the hammock, there suddenly dashed around the corner of the cabin a tall form, a revolver in each hand.

He had his revolver leveled full at the young man, as he called out sternly:

"Up with your hands, renegade, or you die!"

"Buffalo Bill!" cried Lucille in suppressed tones, as though realizing, even in her surprise, the danger of speaking that name there. Then she quickly added:

"For God's sake do not kill him, for he is my brother."

Lester Lamar had sprung to his feet, yet made no move to draw a weapon, but stood gazing defiantly into the face of the scout, who, at the words of Lucille, lowered his weapons and said quickly:

"Let me step into the cabin, for I may be seen here."

Quickly Lucille seized his hand and fairly dragged him into the cabin, while she said reproachfully:

"Oh, why did you come here, for your life will be the forfeit?"

"I came for you, Miss Lucille, but I did not expect to find you in a white man's cabin, free and with company."

"I will explain all later; but now you must go into hiding for if you were discovered—"

"Not a red-skin has seen me, I assure you. I have been four days coming from the river to this cabin, which I saw from the ridge above, as I did you also, and this young man, who I thought must be some renegade.

"I crept up behind the cabin, having seen you seated on the piazza, and dashing around, covered him; but you say he is your brother."

"My half brother; but it is a long story which I will tell you all about when I have hidden you in another room, for I am almost afraid even to trust Yellow Bird."

"Yellow Bird is half white, Lucille, and will go away with you. Yes, I'll vouch for her, for she told me she wished to return with you."

"Then you are safe here, Buffalo Bill, for I cannot but call you so, and you shall know the whole story, so sit down, for it is a long one, and there are secrets in it which you must not breathe to any one."

"You have my pledge not to betray anything, Miss Lucille," said Buffalo Bill, and then he heard the story of her father's strange life, her uncle's, her own and her brother's.

The scout listened with an interest that was intense, and when he had heard all, said in a low tone:

"And I have a story to tell, too, Miss Lucille, and it is that you need no longer dread your wicked uncle, the outlaw."

"I crossed the river at the spot where you did, and that night camped not far away."

"The next morning the outlaw rode full upon me; we saw each other at the same time, but I was a little the quickest and my bullet pierced his brain."

"I had crossed the river upon a small raft the soldiers had made for me, and so I staked his horse out, when I was sure that he was alone, and putting the body on the raft, poled back to the other shore."

"There I found that your father, who was to have crossed at the ford, and go with me to rescue you, had returned, having been fired on by the Indian sentinel and slightly wounded."

"You mean it—slightly wounded?" cried Lucille.

"I tell you the truth, for Surgeon Denmead was in camp and extracted the bullet. I had a talk with your father and he was doing well, but did not wish me to risk coming."

"How glad I now am that I did, for I have found you, though I have not yet rescued you."

"And my outlaw uncle?"

"Lieutenant Worth had his soldiers bury him, for the lieutenant is waiting on the river for your return, and just as I was leaving another force came up which had taken your trail from Monument Hill and followed it to the river, so both are there."

"I recrossed the river then on the raft, waited until night, and mounting the horse of the outlaw, made a flank movement to reach the camp, determined to play Captain Eagle, if I met a red-skin, for we were not unlike in size and face, and I speak the Indian tongue fairly well, while the horse and the coat and hat I appropriated would help me out, I knew."

"I did not care to risk it by day, so flew by night only, reached the ridge, reconnoitered and here I am, Miss Lucille; and my advice is that we get out of this at once."

Lucille turned to her brother who said: "Yes, we will go. I will once more play Death Face the chief, for that will be best, and I will bring disguises for you, Lucille, and Yellow Bird, so that in the darkness you will be taken for braves."

"I will bring ponies, too, and we will go up the ridge trail, where Buffalo Bill's horse is, and then, together, we will go down to the river."

"If we meet any bands, Death Face the chief passes unquestioned."

So it was decided, and while the young man went to make his arrangements for leaving the Indian camp forever, Lucille and Yellow Bird prepared for their escape, Buffalo Bill keeping in hiding.

CHAPTER LXIII.

CONCLUSION.

UNDER the guidance of the young chief the trail to the river was made in perfect safety, Buffalo Bill being taken for the outlaw, and Lucille and Yellow Bird for braves, by the bands of Indians they passed.

No one questioned Death Face, and on he rode with his escaping party, Lucille and Yellow Bird having their faces painted and in their leggings riding in masculine fashion, while the pack-horses they had along were well loaded with things taken from the Manly cabin and the young chief's tepee.

Reaching the river before dawn Lucille

added to her costume her riding-habit and felt better able to face the soldiers on the other side.

They crossed on the raft, which made several trips, the horses swimming over; then mounting they rode on to the soldiers' camp.

Such a welcome as greeted them, when Buffalo Bill and the sergeant's daughter were recognized, cannot be described, for the soldiers seemed to have gone wild.

In the week that had passed since he was wounded the sergeant had much improved, and after Lucille had greeted him, she told him the story of finding her brother, and Lester was taken to where the sergeant was "in hospital."

The meeting between father and son was most affecting, while tears came into the brave man's eyes as he grasped Buffalo Bill's hand and said:

"I owe all this to you, Cody, and Lucille tells me she has told you all."

Fearful of risking his daughter so near the red-skins, when they found their young chief missing, the sergeant said he was able to travel. The march was therefore begun after the noon meal, the trail taken being the same one that Lucille had traveled with the outlaw.

The command was three days getting back to the fort, but when they came in sight, and it was seen that Lucille had been rescued, again there was a wild scene of rejoicing.

Then, too, the sergeant had more joy added to his cup of bliss, for the last coach through had brought him his commission, "for special and gallant services," as a first lieutenant in the Army of the United States!

It was Lucille who told Mildred Lamar of her husband's death, and also all the truth that she had learned regarding his life.

The deceived wife bowed her head as she said, sadly:

"So let it be, Lucille, I have no regret."

Lester Lamar was welcomed as Lieutenant Fallon's son, for the ex-sergeant still kept the name of Louis Fallon. The young man was looked upon as a young captive of the Indians, and was not known as Death Face, the chief.

After a month's stay at the fort, under the plea of his wound unfitting him for service, for it was still troublesome, Lieutenant Fallon resigned his commission, feeling that he had been vindicated in having won it, unaided; and with his daughter, son and Mrs. Lamar, went eastward, and thence to Texas, to his old ranch home, where the outlaw's widow, after a year's passage, became his wife.

Nor was that the only wedding at the ranch, for thither had gone Lieutenant Walter Worth to claim his bride, the beautiful Lucille, known as the sergeant's daughter.

As for Lester Lamar, his tastes ran for a wild life; and under Buffalo Bill's tutorship, he won fame as a scout, and is to-day known upon the plains as "Buffalo Bill's Protege."

THE END.

NEXT DIME LIBRARY, NUMBER 817.

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OR,

Katch & Pinch, Bowery Lawyer Sharks.

BY CAPTAIN HOWARD HOLMES.

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